For Werner Ribl
In gratitude for
your research
Lotte Mus

VIATOR

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE STUDIES

Volume 37 (2006)

PUBLISHED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

THE CENTER FOR MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

BREPOLS

NEGOTIATING THE BOUNDARIES OF GENDER IN RELIGIOUS LIFE: ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL AND HERSENDE, ABELARD AND HELOISE

•

by Constant J. Mews

Throughout northern France, religious life was transformed in the first half of the twelfth century by a dramatic increase in the number of female communities, all of whom had to negotiate an appropriate relationship with the male clerics deputed to serve them.[1] This task was not easy. At Fontevraud, Robert of Arbrissel (ca. 1045–1116) established an abbey for both women and men in 1100/1101 with the help of a widow of noble birth, Hersende (d. ca. 1113), his first prioress. In 1129, Peter Abelard (1079–1142) entrusted control of an oratory that he had dedicated to the Paraclete, to Heloise (d. 1164). These were just two of a number of new religious communities in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries where the definition of gender roles took some time to establish. The Rule of Benedict had nothing to say about how relationships between men and women should be negotiated. While Robert and Abelard have both tended to attract attention as charismatic personalities, it may be more useful to see their lives within the context of a broader questioning of roles of both women and men in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. The complex connections between Robert, Hersende, Heloise, and Abelard need to be situated within evolving ideals of spiritual friendship, manifest not just in religious life, but in letters and poems exchanged between women and men during this period. Robert was not the first preacher to pursue ideals of spiritual friendship that crossed the boundaries of gender.

The potential for controversy created by excessive intimacy between men and women in religious life is vividly illustrated in a letter that Marbod of Rennes (1035–1123) sent to Robert of Arbrissel, probably around 1098, a few years before the foundation of Fontevraud as an abbey in 1100/1101.

> You are said to love greatly cohabitation with women—in which matter you once sinned—in order that you may strive to purify the contamination of old wickedness, purportedly in the name of new religious practice, using the same material. You deign to join women not only by day at a common table but also by night in a common bed—or so it is reported. Your whole flock of disciples does likewise so that you, lying in the middle amongst them, ob-

[1] This increase is documented by Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890–1215* (Ithaca 1997) 15. There is a large literature on women's monasticism in the 12th c. Relating to France, see for example Penelope Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago 1991). The theme of the need of both women and men to negotiate the *cura monialium* is developed by Fiona Griffiths, "'Men's Duty to Provide for Women's Needs': Abelard, Heloise, and Their Negotiation of the Cura Monialium," *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004) 1–24. I am indebted to Jacques Dalarun, Dominique Poirel, Bruce Venarde, and Fiona Griffiths for discussion of a number of issues in this paper, and to Werner Robl for first revealing the significance of Hersende; see his website at www.abaelard.de/abaelard/000001buch.htm#5.

> struct the laws of waking and sleeping for both sexes. They say that women follow you on your wanderings and are constantly by your side when you preach. They assert also that you keep not a small number of women in different places and regions, in hospices and lodgings, women intermingled with men (not with impunity), on the pretext that you have assigned them to the care of the poor and pilgrims. How dangerous is this practice the wailing of babies, to not put too fine a point on it, has betrayed.[2]

Marbod was particularly troubled by the association of women with men in the religious life, and the fact that some of these women also had young babies with them. The implication of his invective is clear. He knew that Robert had committed some sexual transgression, and that he was now repairing this by continuing to associate with women, living in various communities that he had established in the guise of hospices for pilgrims and the poor. He claims that some of these women were continuing to nurse young infants, implying that this was a consequence of allowing too great a blurring of gender roles in the name of religion. In 1098, Marbod was continuing to act as archdeacon of Angers on behalf of its bishop, Geoffrey of Mayenne (1094/95–1101), even though he had been appointed bishop of Rennes in 1095. Marbod viewed these informal communities established by Robert as subverting conventional norms of religious order.[3]

Marbod's criticisms did not prevent Robert from subsequently attracting significant patronage from Angevin nobility, most importantly from Fulk V of Anjou (1109–1142), and his mother Bertrada of Montfort (d. ca. 1115/16). Bertrada was often accused of being a sexual predator, having been married to Fulk IV (1069–1109) between 1089 and 1092, before becoming the consort of Philip I of France and ousting Bertha as queen of France. In 1112, Bertrada established a daughter-house of Fontevraud at Hautes-Bruyères.[4] Fontevraud also benefited from the family connections of Petronilla of Chemillé, who succeeded to Hersende as prioress by 1113, and who, in September 1115, was allowed by an ailing Robert to become its first abbess. Through such connections, Fontevraud had become an astonishingly successful and wealthy community, closely connected to the house of Anjou, by the time of Robert's death on 16 February 1116.

[2] *Epistola ad Robertum* 5, PL 171.1481C; trans. Bruce Venarde, *Robert of Arbrissel: a Medieval Religious Life* (Washington, DC 2004) 93, with slight changes. Venarde, who provides useful annotated translations to all the primary sources relating to Robert, notes that the edition in Johannes von Walter, *Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs: Studien zur Geschichte des Mönchtums*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1903–1906) 1.181–189, is superior to that in PL 171.1480–1486: "Mulierum cohabitationem, in quo genere quondam peccasti, diceris plus amare, ut qui antiquae iniquitatis contagium [*supp.* incurristi], novae religionis exemplo circa eamdem materiam studeas expiare. Has etenim solum communi accubitu per noctem, ut referunt, accubante simul et discipulorum grege, ut inter utrosque medius jacens, utrique sexui vigiliarum et somni leges praefigas. Has peregrinationis tuae loquuntur esse pedissequas, et disputanti tibi jugiter assidere. Sed et diversis in locis et diversis in regionibus non parvum te asserunt habere numerum feminarum per xenodochia et diversoria divisarum, quas maribus non impune permistas, ad pauperum et peregrinorum obsequi deputasti. Quod quam periculose sit factum, ut compendiose dicam, vagitus infantium prodiderunt."

[3] On Marbod remaining as archdeacon of Angers during the episcopate of Geoffrey of Mayenne, see Oliver Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou et son entourage au XIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris 1972) 1.257 n. 266.

[4] *Vita altera* 12 (PL 162.1063BC) and 74; trans. Boudet, ed. Dalarun 270 and 295–296; trans. Venarde 32, 66–67. This passage is not by Andrew, but was based on the *Vita Bernardi Tironensis. Recueil des actes de Louis VI*, ed. Jean Dufour, 4 vols. (Paris 1992) no. 75, 3.168–169. The information that she was first at Fontevraud comes only from a 19th-c. history of Hautes-Bruyères by Lejeune (itself lost in 1944), using sources that have also since disappeared.

In some quarters, however, suspicions were still being voiced about Robert's relationships towards women. Soon after his death, Petronilla commissioned Baudri of Bourgueil to write an account of Robert's life. Baudri responded by presenting Robert as exemplary in his relationships to women, being motivated only by evangelical precept as well as concern for all social classes in society. Baudri passes very briefly over the informal communities of women to which Marbod took exception, but dwells on the foundation of Fontevraud, where he explains that from the outset women lived separately from men without scandal, as a single community around a common church.[5]

The lingering controversy surrounding Robert's reputation can be glimpsed within vitriolic comments made by Roscelin of Compiègne in a letter that he addressed to Peter Abelard in around 1119/20. Roscelin claimed that he had himself seen Robert urging women to abandon their husbands for the sake of religious life, even against the wishes of the bishop of Angers. Roscelin argued that such women were morally responsible for any adultery their husbands might commit.[6] Roscelin's criticism of Robert, itself a response to comments made by Abelard in a letter (now lost) to the canons of Saint-Martin of Tours, provoked Abelard to affirm to the bishop of Paris that Robert was "an outstanding preacher of Christ" in a letter, sent in around 1120.[7] Abelard refers here to an open letter that Roscelin had written against Robert of Arbrissel, that has not survived.[8] Roscelin accused both Robert and Abelard of blurring traditional gender boundaries. He even mocked Abelard for using a private seal, interpreting it as carrying the image of a man and a woman, and thus as proof of his continuing passion for Heloise.[9] Roscelin shared with Marbod a common set of assump-

[5] Baudri of Bourgueil, *Vita B. Roberti de Arbrissello*, PL 162.1043A–1058A; trans. Venarde 6–21.

[6] Roscelin, *Epistola ad Abaelardum*, ed. J. Reiners, *Der Nominalismus in der Frühscholastik*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 8.5 (Münster 1910) 67 (PL 178.361CD): "Vidi enim dominum Robertum feminas a viris suis fugientes, viris ipsis reclamantibus, recepisse, et, episcopo Andegaviensi ut eos redderet praecipiente, inobedienter usque ad mortem obstinanter tenuisse. Quod factum quam irrationabile sit considera. Si enim uxor viro debitum negat, et ob hoc ille moechari compellitur, major culpa est compellentis quam agentis. Rea ergo adulterii est femina virum dimittens postea ex necessitate peccantem. Quomodo ergo eam retinens et fovens immunis et non particeps ejusdem criminis erit? Illa enim nequaquam hoc faceret, nisi qui eam retineret inveniret."

[7] Abelard, Letter 14, ed. Edmé Smits, *Peter Abelard. Letters IX–XIV* (Groningen 1983) 280 (PL 178.357C): "Hic contra egregium illum preconem Christi Robertum de Arbrosello contumacem ausus est epistolam configere ..."

[8] A treatise *Roscelinus contra Robertum* is mentioned in an unidentified library catalogue, edited by François Dolbeau (to whom I am indebted for the reference), "Deux catalogues inédits de bibliothèques médiévales," *Nova de Veteribus. Mittel- und neulateinische Studien für Paul Gerhard Schmid*, ed. Andreas Bihrer and Elisabeth Stein (Munich-Leipzig 2004) 326–355 at 342. Dolbeau suggests a Norman provenance for the library catalogue, as it refers to two unusual texts, a commentary on Ecclesiasticus of Richard of Préaux, a monk at Bayeux before he became abbot of Préaux (diocese of Lisieux), and sermons of Richard's friend, Adelme, a monk of Saint-Germer-de-Fly, longtime resident in Fécamp. Roscelin, accused of heresy by Fulk, bishop of Beauvais in 1089–1092, before he was welcomed by Fulk IV to teach at Loches ca. 1093, signs a charter at Bayeux on 7 May 1092, sometime after the Council of Soissons; see Mews, "St. Anselm, Roscelin and the See of Beauvais," *Anselm, Aosta, Bec and Canterbury. Papers in Commemoration of the Nine-Hundredth Anniversary of Anselm's Enthronement as Archbishop. 25 September 1093*, ed. David E. Luscombe and Gillian R. Evans (Sheffield 1996) 110, repr. in Mews, *Reason and Belief in the Age of Roscelin and Abelard, Variorum Collected Studies Series* (London 2002) VIII.

[9] Roscelin, *Epistola ad Abaelardum*, ed. Reiners 80 (PL 178.372A): "Ad hujus imperfecti hominis ignominiae cumulum vero pertinet, quod in sigillo, quo fetidas illas litteras sigillasti, imaginem duo capita habentem, unum viri, alterum mulieris, ipse formasti."

tions about the correct role that any Christian teacher or preacher should adopt in relation to women. Excessive intimacy was dangerous, and should be avoided.

Abelard's relationship to Robert of Arbrissel and Fontevraud was complex. In the *Historia calamitatum*, written in 1132/33, Abelard reports that he initially had to defend himself from criticism that he was not doing enough for the nuns, but then encountered suspicion that in resuming contact with the Paraclete his motives were less than pure. He devotes a significant part of his narrative to providing authoritative precedent for men giving support to religious women, citing the example of St. Jerome in caring for his learned female friends, and above all the example of Jesus himself.[10] Abelard then offers cautionary words about the practice of establishing an abbess over other women, of requiring women to follow the same Rule as men, and sometimes of allowing an abbess to rule over clergy with too heavy a yoke:

> Thus I am not a little surprised that customs have long developed in monasteries, that just as abbots are put in charge of men, thus abbesses are also put in charge over women, and that women as much as men bind themselves to profession of the same Rule, in which however, many things are contained that cannot be carried out by women, as much by those in charge as by their subordinates. As well, we see in several places the natural order so disturbed that abbesses and nuns are put in charge of clerics themselves, to whom the people are subject, and they can so much more easily be led to wrong desires, as they are able to be more fully in charge and impose on them [the clerics] a heavy yoke. The satirist recognized this when he said: "Nothing is more intolerable than a rich lady."[11]

In arguing that women should not follow the same Rule as men, Abelard anticipates the observation made by Heloise in her third letter, that women were not able carry out all the precepts in the Rule of Benedict, as if he had already heard Heloise raise this criticism in spoken conversation. Abelard then explicitly criticizes the practice of an abbess having authority over both men and women, on the grounds that this can lead to abuse of power. This was the norm at Fontevraud, after Petronilla of Chemillé had been appointed as first abbess of the community in September 1115, with authority over both men and women at Fontevraud and all its daughter-houses. In the earliest known document from the Paraclete, a solemn privilege issued by Pope Innocent II on

[10] Abelard, *Historia calamitatum* (henceforth *HC*) ed. J. Monfrin (Paris 1967) 101: "In quo nec invidie mihi murmur defuit, et quod me facere sincere sincera karitas compellebat, solita derogantium pravitas impudentissime accusabat, dicens me adhuc quadam carnalis concupiscientiae oblectatione numquam paterer." The Latin text of letters 1–7 is edited along with the translation of Jean de Meun by Eric Hicks, *La vie et les epistres Pierres Abaelart et Heloys sa fame* (Paris 1991). The Latin text of letters 1–8 (including the Rule), along with letter 9 and other texts relating to Abelard and Heloise (although not in a new edition), is usefully supplied with an annotated translation into Italian by Ileana Pagani, with reflections on the transmission of their text by Giovanni Orlandi, *Epistolario di Abelardo ed Eloisa* (Turin 2004).

[11] *HC*, ed. Monfrin 105: "Unde non mediocriter miror consuetudines has in monasteriis dudum inolevisse, quod quemadmodum viris abbates, ita et feminis abbatisse preponantur, et ejusdem regule professione tam femine quam viri se astringant, in qua tamen pleraque continentur que a feminis tam prelatis quam subjectis nullatenus possunt adimpleri. In plerisque etiam locis, ordine perturbato naturali, ipsas abbatissas atque moniales clericis quoque ipsis, quibus subest populus, dominari conspicimus, et tanto facilius eos ad prava desideria inducere posse quanto eis amplius habent preesse, et jugum illud in eos gravissimum exercere; quod satiricus ille [Juvenal, *Satires* 6.460] considerans ait, 'Intolerabilius nichil est quam femina dives.'"

28 November 1131, Heloise is indicated as carrying the rank of prioress, not abbess.[12] This may be consistent with Abelard's initial thoughts about the organization of the Paraclete. In his subsequent writing for Heloise, he formulates the idea more clearly that *abbatissa* is a contradiction in terms as a word, as *abba* means Father, not mother: "What we now call abbesses, antiquity used to call *diaconissas* as if they were ministers rather than mothers."[13]

Abelard's criticism of appointing abbesses ruling over clergy is only part of a larger discussion in the *Historia calamitatum* setting out why and how male clerics should minister to religious women. His account is not simply one of autobiography. In the final part of his narrative Abelard provides his vision of the principles that should underpin religious life at the Paraclete. This suggests that Abelard deliberately intended his account to be read by Heloise, and that he is addressing her as an anonymous friend, experiencing a situation of distress, but invents a mythical male friend, so that Heloise would draw out his theological message, that true consolation came from the Holy Spirit.[14] This enabled Abelard to present his past relationship with Heloise simply as an affair of lust, and to argue that the difficulties he had encountered providentially led to the establishment of a religious community, under the protection of the Holy Spirit. By identifying the mythical friend to whom Abelard addresses the *Historia calamitatum* as "beloved brother in Christ and most familiar companion in religious life," Abelard suggests that he was unwilling to offer consolation to Heloise directly as a woman, in the way that he used to when he exchanged love letters with her in the past.[15] Abelard's broader strategy in the last part of his narrative is to define what should be the correct relationship between a male spiritual guide and the women under his care. From the outset of her first response to this account, Heloise resists this desire of Abelard to maintain a distance between themselves. Playing along with the fiction that Abelard was writing to another male friend, she accuses him of not recognizing the genuine friendship that she thought she once shared with him. The greetings that she attaches to her three letters all articulate her desire to return to a less hierarchical, more intimate relationship. In her first greeting, she begins by addressing him as a spiritual daughter writing to her lord, but concludes simply *Abaelardo Heloysa*, while in the second she addresses him as *Unico suo post Christum unica sua in Christo* and in the third even more concisely as in a relationship of equality: "To him who is specially hers, she who is singularly his (*Suo specialiter, sua singulariter*)."[16]

[12] *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye du Paraclet*, ed. C. Lalore, Collections des principaux cartulaires du diocèse de Troyes 2 (Paris 1878) 1–3.

[13] Letter 7, PL 178.238D–239A; Abelard, Rule, ed. T. P. McLaughlin, "Abelard's Rule for Religious Women," *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956) 241–292, esp. 267; this letter is translated by Vera Morton, in *Guidance for Women in 12th-Century Convents* (Woodbridge 2003) 52–95, esp. 70. In her translation of the Rule, Batty Radice misleadingly renders *diaconissa* as abbess, even in the revised edition of *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (1974; London 2003) 145, to which Michael T. Clanchy adds a note on 277 n. 48.

[14] I raise this possibility in *Abelard and Heloise*, Great Medieval Thinkers (New York 2005) 151.

[15] *HC*, ed. Monfrin 107: "Hec, dilectissime frater in Christo et ex divina conversatione familiarissima comes..."

[16] Letter 6, ed. Hicks 88. In the 1974 edition of her translation, Radice relied on the faulty version of this greeting printed by Duchesne in 1616 (repr. in PL 178.213A: *Domino specialiter...*), *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (n. 13 above) 159 (in which this is numbered as Letter 5); in the 2003 revision of her translation, both versions are given, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* 93 (now numbered as Letter 6). The Hicks edition leaves no doubt, however, that the consistent reading of the manuscripts is *Suo specialiter...* Heloise

In the *Historia calamitatum*, Abelard distances himself from any such personal intimacy by emphasizing a very traditional vision of the relationship between men and women within religious life. His criticism of abbesses ruling over men may well have been directed not against Robert of Arbrissel but against the practice that had evolved under Petronilla, since she had been established as abbess with overall authority of nuns and clerics at Fontevraud and its daughter houses. Abelard's comments implied assumptions about a natural order that Heloise found difficult to accept.

Abelard's argument that women constitute the weaker text, and should not rule over men, has often been criticized by those who see this as a sign of a dominating personality. While Mary McLaughlin and Alcuin Blamires have emphasized the originality of Abelard's writing about the dignity of women, Guy Lobrichon highlights the desire of Heloise to be identified as an abbess in her own right, against the controlling influence of Abelard, observing that she did acquire this title by 1135.[17] There is no doubt that both Abelard and Heloise had to negotiate the question of how men were to minister to women at the Paraclete, as argued by Fiona Griffiths.[18] At Marbach, an Augustinian community of religious women and men, where the nun Guta and the canon Sintram, collaborated in producing an important manuscript, Abelard's sermon 30, urging support for the new foundation of the Paraclete, was adapted to promote respect for pastoral care for nuns.[19] Abelard evidently sympathized with the movement to support women pursuing a religious life, but was cautious about the way authority structures had evolved at Fontevraud, particular after Robert's death.[20] Abelard's complex and often ambivalent attitude towards what constituted a correct relationship between women and men was part of a broader uncertainty in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries about the boundaries of gender, evident very clearly in the life of Robert of Arbrissel. This blurring of the boundaries between men and women in religious life was itself a consequence of a desire to involve women in a movement to renew apostolic life, that itself can be traced back to at least the second half of the eleventh century.

alludes to his being *specialis* to her, while Abelard prefers to call her *singula* or unique, because for a dialectician, *specialis* means belonging to a species; see Mews, *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard. Perceptions of Dialogue in Twelfth-Century France* (New York 1999) 120–122.

[17] Mary Martin McLaughlin, "Peter Abelard and the Dignity of Women: Twelfth Century 'Feminism' in Theory and Practice," *Pierre Abélard—Pierre Le Vénérable. Les Courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en occident au milieu du xiie siècle* (Paris 1975) 287–333; Alcuin Blamires, "*Caput a femina, membra a viris*: Gender polemic in Abelard's letter 'On the authority and dignity of the nun's profession,'" *The Tongue of the Fathers. Gender and Ideology in Twelfth-Century Latin*, ed. David Townsend and Andrew Taylor (Philadelphia 1998) 55–79; Barbara Newman, "Authority, authenticity and the repression of Heloise," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992) 121–57, repr. in Barbara Newman, *From virile woman to woman Christ. Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia 1995) 19–45. Guy Lobrichon, *Héloïse. L'amour et le savoir* (Paris 2005), esp. 258–282 "Le monastère d'Héloïse." See the charter of 17 June 1135, *Cartulaire du Paraclet*, ed. Lalore (n. 12 above) 3–4.

[18] See n. 1 above.

[19] Fiona Griffiths, "Bride and *Dominae*: Abelard's *Cura monialium* at the Augustinian monastey of Marbach," *Viator* 34 (2003) 57–88.

[20] Relatively few studies have been written exploring the attitude of both Abelard and Heloise to Fontevraud. Two exceptions are Carl Kelso Jr., "Women in Power: Fontevrault and the Paraclete Compared," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1991) 55–69; and Bruce L. Venarde, "Praesidentes Negotiis: Abbesses as Managers in Twelfth-Century France," *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy*, ed. Samuel K. Cohn Jr. and Steven A. Epstein (Ann Arbor 1996) 189–205.

ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL AND HIS ELEVENTH-CENTURY BACKGROUND

Ever since Jules Michelet eulogized Robert of Arbrissel as a critic of the establishment and a promoter of the role of women, scholars have tended to emphasize the charismatic aspect of his personality, rather than his debt to existing practices of religious life.[21] Johannes von Walter identified him as one of a group of wandering preachers, along with Vital of Savigny and Bernard of Tiron, committed to religious reform.[22] Ernst Werner perceived Robert as a critic of a feudal aristocracy, and friend of the poor, women, and outcasts.[23] Jean-Marc Bienvenu accentuated more the penitential aspect of his teaching, while retaining a focus on his charismatic identity.[24] Jacques Dalarun, who has made an enormous contribution to study of Fontevraud through his discovery of a sixteenth-century translation of the hitherto unknown complete text of the *Vita altera*, written by Andrew, a cleric of Fontevraud, has argued that abbess Petronilla wished to control access to his memory, and may have been responsible for censoring the original Latin text of Andrew's account.[25] Andrew, who focuses on the last year of Robert's life, reports in much more detail than Baudri the debate surrounding Petronilla's appointment as first abbess of Fontevraud, and the arguments that erupted between Petronilla and the archbishop of Bourges over where Robert should be buried.[26]

Robert was not the first preacher to establish a religious community in which women and men lived alongside each other. Phyllis Jestice has observed that Robert was imitating the practice of monastic preachers, like William of Hirsau (d. 1091), who attracted a wide audience among both men and women, of all social classes.[27] He encouraged women to lead a religious life alongside monks in houses that followed a reformed way of life, as at Admont in Austria and at Zwiefalten in Suabia.[28] The label "double monastery," coined by Stephan Hilpisch to describe such foundations, gives an illusory sense of a fixed organizational structure to arrangements that were in real-

[21] Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France* (first pub. 1833), printed with *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. P. Vuillaneix, 21 vols. (Paris 1971–1982) 4.459–461, repr. and commented on by Dalarun, *L'impossible sainteté* (n. 25 below) 120–123.

[22] Johannes von Walter, *Die ersten Wanderprediger Frankreichs: Studien zur Geschichte des Mönchtums*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1903–1906).

[23] Ernst Werner, *Pauperes Christi: Studien zu social-religiösen Bewegungen im Zeitalter des Reformpapsttums* (Leipzig 1956).

[24] Jean-Marie Bienvenu, *L'étonnant fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris 1981).

[25] Jacques Dalarun, *L'impossible sainteté. La Vie retrouvée de Robert d'Arbrissel (v. 1045–1116), fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris 1985); Dalarun edits the 16th-c. translation of Boudet on 255–301, effectively extending the Latin version of the text, printed in PL 162.1057B–1078C. The entire text is translated by Venarde 26–67 (50–67 is based on the French translation). Dalarun draws on this research in his biography, *Robert d'Arbrissel, fondateur de Fontevraud* (Paris 1986).

[26] Dalarun, *L'impossible sainteté* 104–108. This interpretation is challenged by Suzanne Tunc, "Après la mort de Robert d'Arbrissel. Le conflit entre l'abbesse et l'évêque," *Le Moyen Age* 98 (1992) 379–390; and questioned by Berenice M. Kerr in her overview of this literature about Robert, *Religious Life for Women, c. 1100–c. 1350: Fontevraud in England* (Oxford 1999) 20–30.

[27] Phyllis Jestice, *Wayward Monks and the Religious Revolution of the Eleventh Century* (Leiden 1997) 130–131, and on William of Hirsau in particular 250–253.

[28] See Julie Hotchin, "Female religious life and the *cura monialium* in Hirsau monasticism, 1080 to 1150," *Listen, Daughter. The* Speculum Virginum *and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Constant J. Mews (New York 2003) 59–83.

ity quite variable.[29] In practice there was no clear written constitution explaining how religious women and men could live within the same community, creating a potentially difficult situation. Women interested in an ascetic life could pursue a variety of arrangements, ranging from living in a hermitage alongside an established male monastic community, to more traditional commitment to a female religious house.

Such arrangements did not necessarily provoke controversy. The mother of Guibert of Nogent (1055–1125), who refused to remarry after the death of her husband, moved into a cell she had built alongside the abbey of St. Germer-de-Fly in Picardy in around 1067, initially in the company of an older woman.[30] She entrusted the young Guibert, then no more than twelve years old, to the care of a monastery, where he would initially become a rebellious spirit and a cause of great anxiety to her. Writing near the end of his life, Guibert contrasted his mother's virtue to the tendency of young women in his own day to adopt extravagant fashions (such as pointed shoes of Cordoban leather) and boast about their love affairs.[31] Guibert admired the way his mother became a commanding figure in her imitation of apostolic life, but distrusted any community in which there was excessive interaction between men and women. He deemed this to be the case with a "heretical" community that involved both men and women, claiming to base itself on the Acts of the Apostles of engaging in gross fornication, on the model of Manichaean heretics condemned by Augustine. Guibert's comment about men sleeping with men in that community, women with women, may simply refer to a religious community like Fontevraud, in which the sexes lived apart, but within a common framework.[32] With more imaginative license than Marbod, Guibert considered such mixing of the sexes, in a community where the leaders were mere *rustici*, could only lead to gross fornication.

Interaction between women and men was a feature of reform movements within the religious life. Sally Vaughn has drawn attention to the presence of aristocratic female recluses at Bec in the late eleventh century, with whom St. Anselm (1033–1109) entered into regular dialogue and personal contact.[33] Sometime during his first period of exile in Lyons (1097–1100), Anselm established an oratory dedicated to Mary Magdalene for certain devout women, continuing to visit them during a second period of exile (1104–1105).[34] Although these women never followed any formal structure to their way of life, their community, still surviving when Eadmer met them in 1116, illuminates how Anselm helped inspire communities outside a formal male monastic

[29] Stephanus Hilpisch, *Die Doppelkloster. Entstehung und Organisation. Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens*, ed. I. Herwegen (Münster in Westf. 1928).

[30] Guibert of Nogent, *Autobiographie* 1.12–14, ed. and trans. Edmond-René Labande (Paris 1981) 74–106; on Guibert's mother see in particular Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, *Lives of the Anchoresses. The Rise of the Urban Recluse in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia 2005) 24–50.

[31] *Autobiographie* 1.12, ed. Labande 80.

[32] *Autobiographie* 3.17, ed. Labande 428–434; see the edition and interpretation of this passage offered by C. J. Mews, "An Excerpt from Guibert of Nogent's *Monodiae* (III, 17) appended to Augustine's *De haeresibus*," *Revue des études augustiniennes* 33 (1987) 113–127, repr. in Mews, *Reason and Belief in the Age of Roscelin and Abelard* (Aldershot 2002).

[33] Sally Vaughn, *St. Anselm and the Handmaidens of God. A Study of Anselm's Correspondence with Women*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 7 (Turnhout 2002) 67–115.

[34] Vaughn, *St. Anselm* (n. 33 above) 11–14, drawing on the account in Eadmer, *Historia novorum in Anglia*, ed. M. Rule (London 1884) 240–241.

circle. Devotion to Mary Magdalene provided an appropriate framework for such a community.

Religious houses for women in the late eleventh century tended to be very aristocratic communities, such as at Wilton and Barking in the south of England and at Le Ronceray in the Anjou. Goscelin of Saint-Bertin (ca. 1040–1114) was a Flemish monk who frequently visited Wilton between 1064 and 1078 to work on his life of Edith, the first of a large number of saints' lives that he wrote, not just for Wilton, but also for nuns at Barking.[35] During this period, he also befriended Eve (ca. 1058–1120), a young woman of noble background who decided to abandon the comfort of Wilton ca. 1080 for a hermitage at Saint-Laurent, Angers, a dependency of Le Ronceray. In his *Liber confortatorius*, Goscelin provides an extended reflection on spiritual growth that draws on pagan as well as patristic tradition, that presumes a remarkable degree of Latin literacy on the part of Eve. The intensity with which he expresses his sense of loss at her departure, have prompted comparisons with Abelard's writing for Heloise during the 1130s.[36] It presumes a remarkable degree of Latin education on her part. As Hollis remarks, Eve's decision to leave Wilton may reflect her dissatisfaction with its aristocratic character. She moved to Angers, where she lived in close association with a male ascetic, Hervé of Vendôme.[37] Geoffrey of Vendôme addresses a letter to Hervé and Eve, without signaling any impropriety in their relationship.[38] Whether or not Robert of Arbrissel came into contact with Eve, the fact that she had developed spiritual friendships initially with Goscelin and then with Hervé in the 1080s, shows that Robert was building on an already existing situation of spiritual friendship between the sexes when he established Fontevraud.

Writing soon after Eve's death in around 1120, Hilary of Orléans, a disciple of Abelard and a friend of Hervé, defends the purity of her life in a way that suggests he was aware of popular rumor: "There lived Eva for a long time with her companion Hervé; / You who hear this, I feel you are disturbed at this word; / Flee, brother from being suspected, nor let there be suspicion here, / This love was not in the world but in Christ."[39] Hilary's desire to quell suspicion reveals how attitudes had changed since

[35] Goscelin's literary career is usefully assessed by Stephanie Hollis, within a volume that she edits, *Writing the Wilton Women. Goscelin's Legend of Edith and Liber confortatorius* (Turnhout 2004) 1–13 and her chapter, "Goscelin's Writings and the Wilton Women," 217–244. Extracts from Goscelin's Lives of the Abbesses at Barking are translated by Vera Morton, *Guidance for Women in 12th-Century Convents* (Woodbridge 2003) 139–155, with an interpretative essay by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne on 157–180.

[36] The *Liber* is edited by C. H. Talbot, "The *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint Bertin," *Analecta monastica*, series 3, Studia Anselmiana 37, ed. M. M. Lebreton, J. Leclercq, and C. H. Talbot (Rome 1955) 1–117. The *Liber* has been translated by W. R. Barnes and Rebecca Hayward, *Writing the Wilton Women* (n. 35 above) 99–212 (a trans. that includes corrections to the Talbot edition). Among a number of valuable essay, Rebecca Hayward comments on the tradition of "ennobling love" that she identifies in the *Liber*, "Spiritual Friendship and Gender Difference in the *Liber confortatorius*," 341–353. Monika Otter has produced her own translation of the work, *The Book of Encouragement and Consolation (Liber confortatorius)* (Woodbridge 2004), with an interpretative essay that focuses on the rhetorical strategies in Goscelin's text (151–167).

[37] Hollis, "Goscelin and the Wilton Women," *Writing the Wilton Women* (n. 35 above) 230.

[38] One of Geoffrey of Vendôme's three letters to Hervé is also addressed to Eva, PL 157.184–188; *Oeuvres*, ed. Geneviève Giordanengo (Paris 1996).

[39] The verse of Hilary of Orleans recalling Eva is edited by N. M. Häring, "Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans," *Studi Medievali* 3a ser. 17 (1976) 915–968, at 928, and again by

the 1080s. Even Geoffrey of Vendôme, who would subsequently question some aspects of Robert's intimacy with women, was not troubled by sending a letter to both Eve and Hervé. The intimacy of Goscelin's writing for Eve, composed soon after she left Wilton in the 1080s, illuminates a remarkable moment in the late eleventh century, when it was quite possible to develop such relationships, without fear of scandal.[40]

A similar situation of educated women wishing to enter into dialogue with male religious, albeit within a more literary context, is also evident in those *Carmina* of Baudri of Bourgueil (1043–1133) addressed to educated women, all very likely to be nuns at Le Ronceray, Angers. Baudri refers to his having received a number of poems from educated women, such as Emma at Le Ronceray and Muriel of Wilton.[41] Gerald Bond has spoken of these poems creating "an Ovidian subculture," because of Baudri's interest in Ovidian poetry.[42] Yet these poems draw not just on secular literature, but also on ideals of friendship that are as much Christian as classical. In many ways, they redefine a vision of religious life, drawing together both literary and philosophical ideals. Only one such poem within Baudri's anthology is explicitly attributed to a female correspondent, namely Constance. Because it contains the same number of verses as Baudri's reply, Jean-Yves Tilliette has argued that Baudri composed both her letter and his reply. Other scholars have argued that the difference in tone and perspective indicate that Constance is a distinct author, and that Baudri was deliberately emulating her poem.[43] There seems little reason to doubt that Baudri did indeed exchange poems with the people he talks about. His *Carmina* present both men and women as engaging in an educated literary exchange. Resisting the notion that Ovid is a source of moral distraction, he promotes the ideal of love as a force of divine ori-

Walther Bulst und M. L. Bulst-Thiele, *Hilarii Aurelianensis Versus et ludi* (Leiden 1997) 21–25, at 23. Hervé sends a letter to *Hylario karissimo et fidelissimo suo* 89–90.

[40] These parallels are discussed by Therese Latzke, "Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 19 (1984) 115–154.

[41] The edition of Phyllis Abrahams, *Les oeuvres poétiques de Baudri de Bourgueil (1046–1130)* (Paris 1926) has been superseded by two editions, one without extensive annotation, *Baldricus Burgulianus, Carmina*, ed. Karlheinz Hilbert, Editiones Heidelbergenses 19 (Heidelberg 1979); the other with French translation and commentary, Jean-Yves Tilliette, *Baldricus Burgulianus, Carmina*, 2 vols. (Paris 1998–2002); see his poems to Muriel: no. 137; to Agnes: no. 138; to Emma, nos. 139 and 153; to or about Constance, nos. 142, 200, 213.

[42] Gerald Bond, "'Iocus Amoris': The Poetry of Baudri of Bourgueil, and the Formation of the Ovidian Subculture." *Traditio* 42 (1986) 143–193, repr. in Gerald Bond, *The Loving Subject. Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia 1995). See also Gabriela Signori, "Muriel and the others ... or poems as pledges of friendship," *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud 1999) 199–212, published in a fuller version, "Muriel und die Anderen ... Bildung und Freundschaft im Austausch der Geschlechter: Der sogenannte "Loirekreis" zu Beginn des 12. Jahrhunderts,": *Orte der Geschlechtergeschichte: Beiträge zur 7. Schweizerischen Historikerinnentagung (16./17. April 1993 Basel)*, ed. Franziska Jenny (Zürich 1994) 181–210 (I am grateful to Signori for this reference).

[43] Jean-Yves Tilliette, "Hermès amoureux, ou les métamorphoses de la Chimère. Réflexions sur les *carmina* 200 et 201 de Baudri de Bourgueil," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 104 (1992) 121–161. Tilliette argues that there is no textual proof that women took part in writing poetic "games" in response to Baudri, without explaining why his descriptions of receiving messages from women should be any less real than messages from other literary friends, like Godfrey of Rheims: "La vie culturelle dans l'ouest de la France au temps de Baudri de Bourgueil," *Robert d'Arbrissel et la vie religieuse dans l'ouest de la France*, ed. Jacques Dalarun (Turnhout 2004) 71–86, esp. 77.

gin.[44] Goscelin of Saint-Bertin was not as well versed in classical literature as Baudri in the writings of Ovid, but shared Baudri's interest in the capacity of pagan philosophy to give moral instruction.[45] In their different ways, the examples of both Eve and Baudri's female friends hint at a shared desire for women to engage in educated dialogue with men, while remaining within the formal constraints of the religious life. In both cases, however, their voices are only heard through the writings of men.

Although Marbod of Rennes would be more critical of Robert of Arbrissel in his relationships with women than Baudri, he may himself have participated in literary exchanges with women. Certain erotic poems survive only in a rare sixteenth-century edition of his verse.[46] These poems never circulated as widely as his other writings. Tilliette rightly warns against identifying Baudri and Marbod as constituting a single "Loire valley school," observing the differences between them in style and content.[47] Nonetheless, the cultural vitality evident in the region of Anjou during the eleventh century cannot be denied.

ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL, HERSENDE, AND THE EVOLUTION OF FONTEVRAUD

It seems no coincidence that Baudri of Bourgueil should both involve educated women as well as men in his literary circle, and admire Robert of Arbrissel for establishing close relationships with the noble women who helped establish Fontevraud, like Hersende. Baudri introduces his account of Robert's life with a letter to Petronilla of Chemillé, exalting how she had spurned the delights of the flesh that she had once enjoyed, to come to Fontevraud to drink at the source of one of the greatest preachers of his day.[48] Confessing his unworthiness for the task, he complains that Petronilla had provided him with only the briefest notes about Robert, apart from the fact that he came from Brittany.[49] While Baudri's account is often identified as less historically valuable than Andrew's *Vita altera* because it has more literary embellishment, its originality lies in its presentation of a new model of sanctity. Baudri presents Robert as gathering together a new kind of spiritual family, embracing women and men of all social classes.

Baudri emphasizes that from the outset, Robert never indulged in the lasciviousness of youth, but "embraced radiant chastity insofar as he was able, and loved inward purity." Baudri's phrase *prout poterat* hints at some awareness of a sexual transgression, hinted at in a more hostile tone in Marbod's letter. He presents Robert as a great wanderer, using phrases to describe how he travelled to Paris in the 1080s, in ways that

[44] In *The Loving Subject. Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France* (Philadelphia 1995) 170–193, Bond includes the Latin text and an English translation of Baudri's poem to Constance and her reply (nos. 200–201 among Baudri's *Carmina*) drawing on the edition of Hilbert, *Carmina* 266–271.

[45] See for example Goscelin's *Liber* 3, trans. Hollis, *Writing the Wilton Women* (n. 35 above) 155–156; in his essay, "Goscelin's Greeks and Romans," (ibid. 401–417), W. R. Barnes observes that his major source of pagan inspiration is Virgil, whom he quotes much more often than Horace and Seneca.

[46] See the poems edited by Walther Bulst, "Liebesbriefgedichte Marbods," *Liber Floridus. Festschrift Paul Lehmann*, ed. Bernhard Bischoff and Suso Brechter (St. Ottilien 1950) 287–301, repr. [with typographical corrections] in Bulst, *Lateinisches Mittelalter. Gesammelte Beiträge*, ed. Walter Berschin (Heidelberg 1984) 182–196.

[47] Tilliette, *Baldricus Burgulianus. Carmina* xxxiii–xxxvii.

[48] Baudri, *Vita* Prologus, PL 162.1043B; trans. Venarde 7.

[49] Baudri, *Vita* Prologus, PL 162.1045B; trans. Venarde 8.

Abelard may deliberately echo in the *Historia calamitatum*: "wandering restlessly through regions and provinces, he could not be unconcerned for letters."[50]

Baudri explains that Robert was recalled from Paris in around 1089, by Sylvester, bishop of Rennes, who wanted assistance with the cause of reforming local clergy. In 1093 or so, Robert left Rennes to pursue further study at Angers, staying there until around 1095, when, for unexplained reasons he fled the city to set up a hermitage at La Roë in the forest of Craon, not far from his birthplace. In doing so, Robert benefited from strong support from the lord of Craon, the uncle of Petronilla of Chemillé.[51] The invitation he received to preach in the presence of Pope Urban II at the dedication of a new church at Saint-Nicolas, Angers, on February 10, 1096, and the official approval he thereby gained, marked a new stage in his career.[52] His concern was to find a place where both men and women "could turn to religious life and live without anxiety about scandal."[53] He settled on the site of Fontevraud, two miles from Candes Saint-Martin, territory belonging to the lord of Montsoreau, on the south bank of the Loire, but in the diocese of Poitiers. Baudri does not speak about the informal communities of religious women, operating hospices, to which Marbod alludes so criticically in his letter to Robert from around 1098. It is quite possible that these hospices were in Angers itself (where Marbod was still archdeacon), and that it was Marbod's criticism that forced Robert to establish a more cloistered way of life for his female companions at Fontevraud, just outside the diocese of Angers. Baudri repeatedly emphasizes the great social diversity of his followers: "Many men of whatever condition flocked to him; women also gathered, poor and noble, widows and virgins, old and young, prostitutes and haters of men."[54] As if countering rumors to the contrary, Baudri idealizes Robert's personal austerity and the commitment of the early disciples at Fontevraud.[55] Women were segregated from men, being devoted to prayer rather than to manual work. Laymen and clerics mixed freely with each other. All called Robert *magister* rather than abbot or lord.[56]

Since he himself was often away preaching, and could not look after this work of construction, he needed someone to take charge of the community in his place. He did

[50] Baudri, *Vita* 7, PL 162.1047A: "sed nitidam, prout poterat, amplexabatur castimoniam, et intrinsecus diligebat munditiam. ... Perambulabat regiones et provincias irrequietus, et in litterarum studiis non poterat non esse sollicitus." Trans. Venarde 10; see Marbod's comment, n. 2 above.

[51] Robert's dependence on aristocratic patronage is stressed by W. Scott Jessee, "Robert d'Arbrissel: Aristocratic patronage and the question of heresy," *Journal of Medieval History* 20 (1994) 221–235.

[52] Baudri, *Vita* 13–15, PL 162.1050C–1051B.

[53] Baudri of Bourgueil, *Vita B. Roberti de Arbrissello* 3, PL 162.1051C: "Videns autem subsequentium multitudinem dilatari, ne aliquid ageretur inconsulto, quoniam mulieres cum hominibus oportebat habitare, ubi possent sine scandalorum scrupulositate conversari et vivere, deliberavit perquirere, et si quod desertum contingisset reperire." Trans. Venarde, *Robert of Arbrissel* 15.

[54] Baudri, *Vita* 19, PL 162.1053B: "Multi confluebant homines cujuslibet conditionis; conveniebant mulieres, pauperes et nobiles, viduae et virgines, senes et adolescentes, meretrices et masculorum aspernatrices." Trans. Venarde, *Robert of Arbrissel* 1–21.

[55] Ibid. 17, PL 162.1054AB: "Divisi sunt homines a mulieribus, et seorsum, in locis remotioribus, praeparatae sunt eis domus, et domus. Mulieres iterum segregavit sagax magister ab invicem, et rursus per cella et cuneos distinxit eas, catervatim colocavit illos et illas, quoniam alteruter numerus in simplicitatem extendebatur."

[56] Baudri, *Vita* 17, PL 162.1051BC "Mulieres tamen ab hominibus segregavit, et inter claustrum eas velut damnavit, quas orationi deputavit; homines vere laboribus mancipavit. ... Praelatum suum magistrum tantummodo vocabant, nam neque dominus, nequa abbas vocitari volebat."

not want to assist the workers, nor could he, because he had to preach to many peoples. There he established one of the sisters as assistant in the construction and teacher, Hersende by name. Having spurned the nobility by which she shone, she joined the female choir; indeed she had previously been a lay sister. Hersende lived as a woman of both great religion and equally great wisdom. To this Hersende, he joined Petronilla, experienced in the management of property; Robert later chose her as abbess, for Hersende had passed on to her reward. [57]

It is difficult to be sure how much Baudri is here kaleidoscoping events. The earliest surviving charter naming Hersende as *prior* (not *priorissa*) of the community is from 1104, in which Sibilla, abbess of Sainte-Croix, Poitiers, grants property to Fontevraud.[58] Petronilla is not mentioned until 1109, when she signs herself, without mention of her status, after Robert and *Hersendis sanctimonialis*.[59]

HERSENDE AND HELOISE

Until recent research by Werner Robl, the figure of Hersende has tended to be passed over rather briefly by historians of Fontevraud. Robl has put forward arguments, however, for identifying Hersende, the first prioress of Fontevraud, whose death was recorded there on 30 November, with Hersende, mother of Heloise, remembered at the Paraclete on 1 December: *Hersindis mater domine Heloise abbatisse nostre.* [60] The obituary of Saint-Jean-en-Vallée, Chartres, reports the death of Hersende as a nun of Fontevraud as 1 December, while that of Saint-Père-en-Vallée, Chartres, records it as 29 November.[61] Such minor variation in date and spelling is not unusual in these obituaries. Robl also observed that Hersende's father, Hubert III of Champagne (*Campania* in Anjou, rather than the County of Champagne), had a grandmother, Eremburg,

[57] Baudri, *Vita Roberti* 21, PL 162.1054BC: "Constituit igitur ex sororibus unam responsis et operibus assistricem et magistram, Hersendis nomine, quae, spreta sua qua praelucebat nobilitate, choris feminarum adhaeserat, imo prior conversa fuerat. Vivebat autem Hersendis et magnae religionis et magni pariter consilii. Huic autem Hersendi conjunxit et Petronillam procurationis mansionariae gnaram, quam ipse Robertus postea elegit in abbatissam; nam Hersendis jam ad superos recesserat. Has itaque duas feminas quoniam cognoverat prudentes et industrias et magnae cautelae personas, aliis, ut dictum est praefecerat sororibus." My translation differs a little from that of Venarde (p. 18), who translates *operibus assistricem et magistram* as "commander and directress for business and building," gliding over the sense of *magistra* as a teacher. *Magistra* is a technical term for a woman teacher. Hildegard was always greeted in letters as *magistra* by her contemporaries, not as *abbatissa*, a term that would have implied she had severed all bonds of obedience to the abbot of Disibodenberg. I follow Venarde in translating *prior* in Baudri's account as *prius* (previously) rather than *prior* as a religious office; alternatively, he says "indeed she was a lay (*conversa*) prior," but this seems to contradict his point that she became a fully enclosed nun at this moment.

[58] *Donationes* 1, PL 162.1095B. *Grand cartulaire de Fontevraud* (henceforward *GC*), ed. Jean-Marc Bienvenu, with Georges Pons and Robert Favreau, vol. 1, Archives historiques du Poitou 63 (Poitiers 2000); the second volume, with its index, is eagerly awaited.

[59] *Diplomata* 1, PL 162.1087C; *GC* 139, 143 (nos. 153, 156)

[60] Werner Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft. Hersindis Mater* (Munich 2001); summarized in his chapter "Hersindis Mater. Neues zur Familiengeschichte Heloisas mit Ausblicken auf die Familie Peter Abaelards," *Peter Abaelard. Leben, Werk, Wirkung*, ed. Ursula Niggli (Freiburg im Breisgau 2003) 25–89. *Obituaire du Paraclet*, ed. A. Boutillier du Retail and P. Piétrisson de Saint-Aubin, *Obituaires de la province de Sens, IV. Diocèses de Meaux et de Troyes* (Paris 1923) 428. The Fontevraud necrology is recorded in *Gallia Christiana*, vol. 2 (Paris 1720) col. 1313.

[61] Ed. A. Molinier, *Obituaires de la province de Sens, II. Diocèse de Chartres* (Paris 1906) 198 [*Obituaire de Saint-Père-en-Vallée*] and 661 [*Obituaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Jean-en-Vallée*]; Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* 79–81; summarized in "Neues zur Familiengeschichte" (n. 60 above) 25–89, esp. 41–43; the Fontevraud necrology is recorded in *Gallia Christiana* 2 (Paris 1720) col. 1313.

from the noble family of Montmorency.[62] This is consistent with a statement made by François d'Amboise in the earlv seventeenth century, that Heloise was a legitimate descendant of the house of Montmorency. Further, Hersende's father had another maternal grandmother called Heloise, the daughter of Odo I, count of Blois, Tours, Chartres, and Troyes, and the brother of a bishop of Orléans.[63] This Heloise may be identical to a noblewoman of the same name who became a recluse at Coulombs, just north of Evreux, but is mentioned as deceased in a charter of 1066, signed among others by Simon I of Montfort, father of Bertrada of Montfort.[64] The coincidences that Hersende of Fontevraud shared the same name and date of death as Hersende mother of Heloise, that both were related to the Montmorency family, and that in both families Hersende and Heloise recur as family names, lend weight to this part of Robl's hypothesis.[65]

Hersende, the first prioress of Fontevraud, is recorded in official charters of Fontevraud as the widow of William of Montsoreau, who had a son, Walter, through an earlier marriage. Walter took over his father's estate (presumably at William's death) in 1087. William's piety and support for religious houses is recorded by Baudri of Bourgueil, who wrote an epitaph in his honor.[66] By her marriage with William, Hersende had a son, Stephen, who subsequently became a canon at the neighboring church of Candes Saint-Martin.[67] Hersende was clearly instrumental in suggesting to Robert that he establish an abbey at Fontevraud on land held by vassals of Walter of Montsoreau, adjoining Saint-Martin-de-Candes, and within the diocese of Poitiers rather than of Angers. Stephen subsequently became a canon at Saint-Martin of Tours, rising to become an archdeacon of Hildebert, archbishop of Tours, sometime after 1125, but died in 1130.[68] We do not know what happened to Hersende after 1087 other than that she became a *conversa* or lay follower of Robert of Arbrissel sometime in the 1090s, and that she was officially enclosed as a nun at Fontevraud when it was established as an abbey in 1100/1101. A charter issued by Fulk V of Anjou between 1109 and 1112/13 says simply that she took a religious habit after the death of William of Montsoreau, without giving details of what happened between 1087 and 1100. It also

[62] Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 96–100; Robl, "Neues zur Familiengeschichte" (n. 60 above) 44–45. Robl explains the complex distinction between *Campania* in Anjou (the origin of the house of Champagne de la Suse) and Champigné, a few miles north of Angers, where Hersende's father had a castle, *Heloisas Herkunft* 96–97. There was a recluse called Heloise, who lived near the abbey of Coulombs-sur-Eure in around 1030, but had died by 1066. Robl provides a helpful family tree of Hersende of Fontevraud, *Heloisas Herkunft* 105, showing that while Hersende's paternal grandmother was a Montmorency, her maternal grandmother was Hersende, daughter of Hubert, viscount of Vendôme, and a brother of Hubert of Vendôme, bishop of Angers 1010–1047, *Heloisas Herkunft* 102.

[63] Amboise declares it was a legitimate descent, *Praefatio apologetica*, repr. in PL 178.74A: "Heloissa vero, ut altera Susanna aut Esthera, pulchra et Deum timens, vetustissimos illos Mommorantios legitima agnatione contingens, canonici Parisiensis non notha, sed neptis ..."

[64] Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 99–100, drawing from her *Vita* in *Acta Sanctorum* (Paris 1668–1701), 6.1 col. 323.

[65] Lobrichon summarises very briefly Robl's argument, without mentioning his argument about the Montmorency connection, or the name of Heloise in the family of Hersende; *Héloïse* (n. 17 above) 121.

[66] Baudri, *Carmina*, no. 26, ed. Jean-Yves Tilliette (Paris 1998) 45–46 and 175. William gives a charter to monks of Bourgueil in 1056/59, to Saint-Florent 1070–1087 and to Saint-Etienne de Vaux 1072–1087, Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou* (n. 3 above) 2.127–128 and 218–219.

[67] *Privilegia* 13 bis, PL 162.1101C. On the aristocratic background of Hersende, Jessee, "Robert d'Arbrissel" (n. 51 above) 221–235, esp. 233.

[68] Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 92–93; Robl, "Neues zur Familiengeschichte" (n. 60 above) 44–45. Hildebert mentions the death of Stephen, Ep. 35, PL 171.259B.

declares that she approved of Stephen giving to Fontevraud the church of Saint-Martin at Candes, which Stephen had acquired from his parents.[69]

Heloise must have been of about the same age as Peter the Venerable (ca. 1094–1153), who would later recall to her that he knew and admired her reputation for learning, even before she became a nun at Argenteuil.[70] Robl's speculation about the identity of Heloise's father of Heloise is less certain than his argument about the identity of her mother. Because no father is mentioned in the Paraclete obituary, he suggests that she was the fruit of an illegitimate union, either with a prominent noble or even with Robert of Arbrissel himself.[71] Marbod's comment about Robert having committed a sexual transgression, and that some of his female disciples had young infants with them in their cells could be construed in this way. Another possibility is that Hersende remarried after the death of William, gave birth to Heloise, but then lost her second husband in around 1096, perhaps on the first Crusade. Ménage, a seventeenth-century historian, mentions a marriage of Hersende to an otherwise unknown Fulk, without indicating why this should have occurred before, rather than after her marriage to William of Montsoreau.[72] The silence of the charters of Fontevraud about any subsequent marriage of Hersende, or any step-sister, should not be taken as conclusive, given that they concern possession of a church given to Stephen by his parents, and have no reason to report any subsequent marriage of Hersende. One possible allusion to Hersende caring for a child in the 1090s could be preserved in the comment of Marbod about Robert's female disciples having wailing children in their company. It may also allude more broadly to the situation of many of Robert's female disciples, perhaps left widows by the first Crusade.

The report of Amboise that Heloise was related to the noble house of Montmorency is given indirect support by Bautier's discovery that this family was the traditional guardian of Argenteuil, founded in the early eleventh century by the mother of Queen Robert on land physically adjacent to Montmorency estate.[73] In 1101, Burchard IV of Montmorency raided the adjoining lands of Saint-Denis, prompting the young prince Louis, son of the ousted Queen Bertha, to lead an army against Burchard and Matthew, count of Beaumont.[74] By 1110, Burchard IV and Matthew of Beaumont had

[69] *GC* 144 and 214 (nos. 157, 219). Hersende's step son, Walter of Montsoreau, renounces all customs over land bequeathed to Fontevraud, notably by Adelaïde de Rivière, PL 162.101C–1092B; see Daniel Prigent, "Fontevraud au début du XIIe siècle: les premiers temps d'une communauté monastique," *Robert d'Arbrissel* (n. 43 above) 255–279, esp. 256–257.

[70] Peter the Venerable, Letter 115, ed. Giles Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1967) 1.303–304. Although Betty Radice repeated the traditional view that Heloise was born in 1100–1101, Clanchy, in notes to the revised edition of her translation, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (n. 13 above) liv, argued that a date in the 1090s was more likely; see Mews, *The Lost Love Letters* (n. 16 above) 32, 302. Given that Peter the Venerable says that he knew of Heloise's reputation even before she entered religious life, it seems like that she was of about the same age as the abbot of Cluny; Letter 115, ed. Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, 2 vols. (Cambridge 1967) 1.303–304. On the closeness of Peter's mother to Robert of Arbrissel, see Constable, 2.239. Constable notes (2.257) that while one version of the chronicle of Cluny reports Peter's age in 1122 as 28, and another gives it as 30, probably to make his consecration as abbot conform to the canonical age.

[71] Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 181–186; "Neues zur Familiengeschichte" (n. 60 above) 55–57.

[72] Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 91, quoting G. Ménage, *Histoire de Sablé* (Paris 1683) 6.153.

[73] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism* (n. 1 above) 43–44.

[74] Achille Luchaire, *Louis VI le Gros. Annales de sa vie et de son règne (1081–1137)* (Paris 1890; repr. Brussels 1890) 8–10, no. 16; Suger, *Vie de Louis VI le Gros*, ed. Henri Waquet (Paris 1964) 14–18; Bur-

been restored to royal favor, through the influence of Stephen of Garlande, in a move that protected their interests against those of Adam of Saint-Denis.[75] In 1118 the king exempted merchants from Vexin, the count of Beaumont and Montmorency, from paying a tax to Saint-Denis, when passing through its lands. This may have been a reward for military assistance that Burchard IV gave to Louis VI in 1118, against the English.[76] The rivalry between Saint-Denis and Argenteuil, both abbeys that claimed a close connection to the crown, came to a head in 1127, when Suger succeeded in expelling Heloise and her nuns from Argenteuil and taking over the abbey, following the disgrace of Burchard IV's political ally, Stephen of Garlande. Burchard IV was a cousin of Eremburg of Montmorency, grandmother of Hersende of Fontevraud.

Unfortunately, Bautier weakened the significance of his discovery about the link between Montmorency and Argenteuil by presuming that it was through a Montmorency connection on the side of Heloise's natural father, that Heloise was allowed into the abbey. Bautier speculated that Heloise's father was either a Montmorency or a political ally, such as Matthew of Beaumont.[77] This assumption led Theodore Evergates to suggest, without firm evidence, that Heloise was the illegitimate child of Gilbert of Garlande (d. 1135/54), and thus half-sister of Manasses, bishop of Orléans.[78] In his recent biography, Guy Lobrichon rightly argues against Heloise being of lower social class than Abelard, but then follows the speculation of Evergates about her father.[79] The fact that Roscelin describes Fulbert, Heloise's maternal uncle, as *nobilis*, indicates that they belonged to the nobility, a different social class from that of the Garlande brothers—a family that rose to prominence in the late eleventh century

chard IV was an important aide to the king in 1119 (ibid. 196); Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History* 11, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford 1969–1980) 5.156–158.

[75] The 1110 charter is summarized by Luchaire (n. 74 above) 53, no. 97. On the links between the Montmorency and Garlande families, see Lemarignier, *Le gouvernement royal* 124–125. Robert-Henri Bautier, "Paris au temps d'Abélard," *Abélard en son temps*, ed. Jean Jolivet (Paris 1981) 75–77. André Duchesne wrote the history of the family without mentioning the connection of Heloise mentioned by d'Amboise, *Histoire de la maison de Montmorency* (Paris 1624). Jean-François Lemarignier describes the family as belonging to the middle aristocracy in the early 11th c., *Le gouvernement royal (987–1108) aux premiers temps capétiens* (Paris 1965) 47 n. 28, drawing on J. Depoin, "La légende des premiers Bouchard de Montmorency," *Bulletin de la commission des Antiquités et arts de Seine-et-Oise*, 27 (1907) 133–154.

[76] Luchaire (n. 74 above) 120, no. 248; see Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 12 (n. 74 above) 6.236–238.

[77] Bautier, "Paris au temps d'Abélard" (n. 74 above) 76, suggested that Heloise was "sans nul doute d'une famille noble de la région parisienne" on the grounds that her uncle belonged to the elite group of canons of the cathedral. He then suggested that because Burchard IV de Montmorency, married to Agnes of Beaumont, was mentioned alongside the Garlande brothers in a document relating to Argenteuil, and had both a daughter called *Aeluis* and a step-brother Matthew of Beaumont, mentioned in the Paraclete obituary, Heloise's father could be from the Montmorency-Bantelu or Beaumont family, and thus was connected by political alliance to the Garlande brothers. Bautier also argued that as Hersende was a relatively uncommon name outside Chartres, Heloise's mother came from this region.

[78] Theodore Evergates, "Nobles and Knights in Twelfth-Century France," *Cultures of Power. Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Thomas N. Bisson (Philadelphia 1995) 11–35, esp. 22, 24. Evergates is less specific about Heloise, but still refers back to Bautier's 1981 study as his authority, to support his claim that Heloise was a natural daughter of the powerful Garlande family, in "Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne," published in *Aristocratic Women in Medieval France*, ed. Theodore Evergates (Philadelphia 1999) 106. Evergates does not raise the issue in his edition, *Littere Baronum. The Earliest Cartulary of the Counts of Champagne* (Toronto 2003).

[79] Lobrichon, *Héloïse* (n. 17 above) 121–125. Lobrichon reports (125) that Evergates has reported doubts about his earlier hypothesis, following a study by Jean-Noël Mathieu, "La famille de Garlande à Possesse," *Mémoires de la Société d'Agriculture, commerce, sciences et arts du Département de la Marne* 108 (1993) 69–94.

through royal favour, but were not identified as nobility.[80] The noble connections of Hersende and Fulbert make it much more likely that Heloise was placed in the royal abbey of Argenteuil through their Montmorency connections than through any patronage from her natural father.

A parallel to Heloise being sent to Argenteuil as a young child in 1100 may be provided by the example of the mother of Guibert of Nogent, entrusting the education of her son to the monks of Saint-Germer-de-Fly, while she wished to move into religious life. The official records of Fontevraud, however, as well as Baudri's account of the life of Robert, pass over these fourteen years between 1087 and 1101 in mute silence. The obituary of the Paraclete only mentions that Hersende was the mother of Heloise, not any religious position that she held or noble title. Neither Fontevraud nor the Paraclete had any desire to reflect on the family connections of Hersende.

HERSENDE AND FULBERT

Robl's research into the noble connections of both Hersende, prioress of Fontevraud, and Hersende, mother of Heloise, throws into rich relief the aristocratic and political context in which Heloise was raised. The Paraclete obituary reports Heloise's uncle not as *Fulbertus* but as *Hubertus canonicus domine Heloise avunculus* on 26 December, coincidentally the same name as the father of Hersende of Fontevraud, *Hubertus de Campania*. Although this could be a scribal error for *Fulbertus*, whose anniversary occurred at Notre-Dame on 23 December as a subdeacon of the cathedral, it could be that *Hubertus* was simply another name for Fulbert, first identified in charters of Notre-Dame as a canon of the cathedral between 1099 and 1102.[81] This date fits in with Robl's suggestion that Fulbert was charged with watching over the young Heloise from the outset of his time in Paris. The bishop at this time was William of Montfort (1095–1102), brother of Bertrada of Montfort, queen of France.[82] Given that

[80] *Actes de Philippe I^er^*, ed. M. Prou (Paris 1908) 388, 392, nos. 154, 157. On the rise of the Garlande families, see Jean Lemarignier, *Le Gouvernement royal aux premiers temps Capétiens* (Paris 1959) 124–125, 154–158. Gilbert (Païen) of Garlande became seneschal to Philip I 1095–1101, followed by his brothers Anselm 1101–1118 (apart from 1104–1107), William 1118–1120, and Stephen himself, 1120–1127. A daughter of Anselm married Amaury IV de Montfort. Evergates notes that although the Garlande brothers were not described as noble, they did have knights of their own in the late 11th c., "Nobles and Knights in Twelfth-Century France," (n. 78 above) 23 n. 64.

[81] Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 55–56, 223; Robl, "Neues zur Familiengeschichte" (n. 60 above) 60–69. Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* 225–229, argues that Fulbert did not die in 1124, when he ceases to be subdeacon at Notre-Dame, but rather became a canon at Saint-Victor, whose obituary mentions the death on 7 November of *Herbertus et Fulbertus, sacerdotes, canonici nostri*; Molinier, *Obituaires* (n. 61 above) 1.598. The very different date of death, coupled with the difference in ecclesiastical rank, makes it seem unlikely that this is the same Fulbert as was subdeacon at Notre-Dame. Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* 77–78, also observes that Fulbert, mentioned as a canon of Notre-Dame in a charter of its dean, Berner, addressed to abbot Odo of Marmoutiers (1124/25–1136/37), and suggests that Fulbert was chosen for this mission because of his knowledge of the region. Fulbert signs as subdeacon of Notre-Dame in 1107; *Cartulaire général de Paris*, ed. Robert de Lasteyrie (Paris 1887) 165, no. 145. Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* 212, observes that Fulbert is mentioned in a charter of 1102, p. 154, no. 130, and must have become a canon between 1099 and 1102.

[82] Ivo of Chartres acknowledged that William's appointment as bishop was canonical, in 1095, Ep. 43, ed. Jean Leclercq, *Yves de Chartres. Correspondance* (Paris 1949) 172–174 (incorrectly confusing this William of Montfort, son of Simon I of Montfort-Amaury and Agnes of Evreux, with St. Anselm's successor at Bec, William of Beaumont, whose mother was Aubrée de Montfort, niece of Roger of Beaumont); see *Vita Willelmi*, PL 150.713–724 and Vaughn, *St. Anselm* (n. 33 above) 112.

entry into the cathedral chapter, where Stephen of Garlande, appointed royal chaplain and one of the three archdeacons of Paris by 1097, was traditionally restricted to an aristocratic elite, Fulbert may have acquired his canonry at Notre-Dame through family connections to Bertrada and her brother, William, bishop of Paris.[83] Stephen of Garlande and his brothers similarly rose to influence at court in the wake of Bertrada's ascent to the throne of France.

Fulbert's connections to both the court and to Stephen of Garlande are reinforced by a story told by Orderic Vitalis, a monk of Saint-Evroul. Orderic reports that Fulbert had once obtained "as a pledge of affection" a certain miraculous relic of St. Evroul from a chaplain to the king, that had in fact been stolen from the royal chapel of Henry I (1032–1060). Fulbert returned the relic to Saint-Evroul through William of Montreuil, prior of Maule (replaced in this position by 1118).[84] Fulbert's restitution of the relic was important to Orderic because St. Evroul's remains had been taken for safety to Orléans during the Viking invasions of the tenth century. Even when the abbey of Saint-Evroul was reestablished in 1051, the monks lamented that they still had no relics of their founder. Orderic thus considered it very important that Fulbert should return a whole bone from the spine of St. Evroul, unjustly stolen by a royal chaplain to the French king.[85] Orderic does not say what prompted Fulbert to break his oath with this royal chaplain, but the timing of Fulbert's visit to Saint-Evroul (which must have occurred before 1118) fits in with his absence from Notre-Dame in 1117, when he was temporarily punished for his responsibility for Abelard's castration.[86] Besides being archdeacon of Paris, Stephen of Garlande was both royal chaplain and dean of a number of churches in Orléans (Saint-Avit, Saint-Samson, and Saint-Aignan), and thus in a position to acquire that relic.[87] Fulbert's attack of conscience and decision to break away from the royal chaplain, led to his wishing to restore the relic of St. Evroul to its proper home. Robl's supposition that Fulbert was a canon at Orléans before he went to Paris by 1102, and thus connected to the milieu of Bertrada, is quite plausible, given Orderic's testimony.

In 1098 Baudri of Bourgueil attempted to obtain the bishopric of Orléans through the influence of Bertrada, but—according to Ivo of Chartres—did not have enough resources to compete with the archdeacon of the city, who eventually obtained that position.[88] Ivo's comment about Baudri's expectation that he would gain support from Bertrada itself reveals how the queen was perceived as a patron by one the great figures of the Angevin literary renaissance of the eleventh century. Bertrada and Stephen

[83] Stephen of Garlande became archdeacon between 1094 and 1097, *Cartulaire général de Paris* (n. 81 above) 144, no. 119.

[84] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 6 (n. 74 above) 3.336–338 (with chronological notes on 3.365–366). Orderic had previously explained how an earlier French king had unjustly stolen the relics of St. Évroul from Normandy, 3.306–322; see Mews, *The Lost Love Letters* (n. 16 above) 59.

[85] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 6 (n. 74 above) 3.320–336; Robl, *Heloisas Herkunft* (n. 60 above) 69–76, does not use Chibnall's edition of Orderic, or her chronological discussion of the priors of Maule, 3.365–366.

[86] Fulbert is missing from a full list of cathedral clergy dated to between the end of February and August 3rd, 1117, but is present in one of 1 April 1119; *Cartulaire général de Paris* (n. 81 above) 198 and 204, nos. 174 and 182.

[87] Dufour, *Recueil des Actes* (n. 4 above) 3.39–40.

[88] Ivo of Chartres, Ep. 65, ed. Jean Leclercq, *Lettres* 288, no. 65.

of Garlande were in a key position to transmit the literary ideals of Baudri to the royal court, and to a circle that included Fulbert and the young Heloise. Baudri addresses a poem to "a boy of wonderful genius," called Peter, who acquired his great eloquence at the age of fifteen but needed to remember to give thanks to God for his genius. The poem can certainly be read as applying to the young Abelard, who attached himself to Roscelin at the ducal palace at Loches in around 1093.[89] Fulbert's willingness to have Heloise educated by the young Peter Abelard, reflects cultural and religious sympathies very similar to those articulated by Baudri in his writings to women like Constance. Baudri's writings legitimized learned interaction between a teacher and a young woman such as Fulbert desired for Heloise. Through his connections at Orléans, briefly alluded to by Orderic, as well as through Stephen of Garlande, Fulbert would have had access to some remarkably rich anthologies of classical texts, such as the *Florilegium Gallicanum*, compiled at abbeys like Fleury.[90] Another Fleury manuscript includes satirical verses about Abelard, Heloise, and Fulbert, as if these individuals were well known to its copyist.[91] Sexual scandal gave endless scope for scurrilous gossip.

THE CRITICISMS OF ROBERT OF ARBRISSEL AND THE FOUNDATION OF FONTEVRAUD

Marbod's letter to Robert, written in around 1098, was ostensibly motivated by fears that he had abandoned his Augustinian community at La Roë in order to spend more time engaging in preaching, in the company of a number of women followers. Marbod's accusation, that Robert ate and slept in the same place as these women, and that there were even young children in the community, signals his alarm at the informal arrangements that prevailed in the years before the foundation of Fontevraud. The letter may well have prompted Robert to abandon these informal hospices within the diocese of Angers in favour of Fontevraud, adjacent to the church of Candes Saint-Martin, entrusted by Hersende and William of Montsoreau to their son, Stephen, and situated within the diocese of Poitiers.[92] Roscelin of Compiègne reports that he had seen Robert of Arbrissel encourage wives to leave their husbands, even though it went against the bishop of Angers. The fact that he refers to the bishop of Angers, rather than of Poitiers (in whose diocese Fontevraud stood), implies that Roscelin was referring to arguments raised in the 1090s, when Robert was still preaching in the diocese of Angers, before establishing Fontevraud. Prior to its foundation, Robert seems to have established informal communities of *conversae*, which included young babies (according to Marbod of Rennes), perhaps not unlike the oratory that St. Anselm had established in honor of Mary Magdalene in Lyons between 1097 and 1100.[93] Marbod feared that Robert was dissolving the boundary between men and women through excessive intimacy with close female disciples, concerned in particular with the poor and

[89] Baudri, *Carmina*, ed. Tilliette 119–120, no. 113.

[90] Richard H. Rouse, "Florilegia and Latin Classical Authors in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Orléans," *Viator* 10 (1979) 31–60.

[91] See the verses found in Orléans, Bibl. Mun. 238, discussed by Mews, *The Lost Love Letters* (n. 16 above) 107–109; and edited and discussed by John Benton, Peter Dronke, and Elisabeth Pellegrin, "Abaelardiana," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 49 (1982) 273–295.

[92] See n. 69 above.

[93] See n. 34 above.

pilgrims, and that he was welcoming too quickly women of less than spotless virtue: "You, casting your nets widely, catch a great quantity of fish, but some say that among the fish you also draw snakes, which cannot easily change their deadly nature. ... Take care, accordingly, that your catch does not catch you. It is not safe to sleep long with a serpent nearby. But if you respond that you are wakeful, and keep vigilant guard for your whole watch—well, such serpents are accustomed to inflict wounds even on the vigilant."[94] By sleeping in close physical proximity to religious women, Robert was challenging traditional notions of distance between sexes in a way that provoked suspicion from his critics.[95] Establishing a more formal religious community at Fontevraud involved negotiating a more rigid separation between the sexes.

There was a political context to Marbod's accusations against Robert, whom he reports was always referred to as *magister* by his disciples. Marbod was troubled by Robert's criticism of other churchmen, "not only of those in orders, but even in high offices."[96] Robert's target is likely to have been Geoffrey of Mayenne, the aristocratic, but illiterate bishop of Angers from 1094/95 until 1101.[97] Geoffrey's appointment to Angers had been engineered by Fulk IV le Rechin of Anjou (1069–1109) as part of a wider strategy to maintain influence over Maine, long in revolt against Norman control.[98] Fulk IV, excommunicated for seizing power in 1069 by imprisoning his brother, was notorious for using both churchmen and a series of wives to extend his own interests. Twenty years later, Fulk dismissed his third wife, Ermengarde of Bourbon, in order to marry the young Bertrada of Montfort, daughter of the count of Evreux, as part of a settlement with Robert Curthose, duke of Normandy.[99] In 1092, Bertrada left Fulk (according to Orderic, out of fear that she would be abandoned) to marry King Philip I, and succeed to Bertha as queen of France. Ecclesiastical disapproval of Bertrada helped Fulk IV win support from the church for his regional ambitions. Geoffrey of Mayenne's appointment to Angers in 1094/95, followed by Marbod's elevation to Rennes in 1096, was part of a broader push by Fulk to gain ecclesiastical approval for his interests to the west and north of Anjou, in particular from Urban II, who visited

[94] Marbod, *Epistola* 9–10, PL 171.1481D–82A: "Et tu quando laxans retia in capturam, concludis piscium multitudinem copiosam, sed iterum pisces trahere diceris et serpentes, qui naturam mortiferam facile mutare nor possunt; quos impune tractare non possis, quarum aspectus non potest esse innoxius; quas videndo, non terror, sed concupiscentia generatur. ...Cave ergo ne te captivet. Non est diu tutum vicino serpente dormire."

[95] Dyann Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton 1993) 32–38.

[96] Marbod, *Epistola ad Robertum* 5, PL 171.1484A: "Porro quod in sermonibus quibus vulgares turbas et imperitos homines docere soles, non tantum praesentium, ut docet, vitia reprehendis, sed etiam dignitatum crimina, quod non decet, enumeras, carpis, laceras."

[97] Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou* (n. 3 above) 1.256–259, esp. 257 n. 259, quoting the *Annales de Saint Aubin, Recueil d'annales angevines et vendômoises*, ed. L. Halphen (Paris 1906) 47: "neophitus et pene illiteratus." On Marbod remaining as archdeacon of Angers during the episcopate of Geoffrey of Mayenne (1094/95–1101), see n. 3 above.

[98] Orderic Vitalis reports that Fulk effectively provoked civil war among the nobles of Anjou by his actions, *Ecclesiastical History* 4 (n. 74 above) 2.304–306, 308–310.

[99] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 8 (n. 74 above) 4.182–185. Chibnall notes on 4.187 n. 3 that Fulk had been married not twice before, as Orderic thought, but three times: to a daughter of Lancelin of Beaugency, to Ermengarde of Bourbon, and to Orengard of Châtaillon, and perhaps also to a daughter of Walter I of Brienne.

Angers on 6–12 February 1096.[100] Pope Urban's approval of Robert's activity as a preacher helped avoid giving the impression of whole-hearted support for Fulk IV and the ill-educated Geoffrey of Mayenne.

Orderic Vitalis berated Fulk's court for replacing traditional warrior values with "effeminate" fashions in hairstyle and dress, "devoting their attention to seeking the favors of women with every kind of lewdness."[101] Like Guibert of Nogent, Orderic was disturbed by the blurring of traditional gender roles he observed within secular society. The young Abelard would have been exposed to such fashions while he studied under Roscelin during the 1090s at Loches, an important palace of the count of Anjou, and Tours. In both the secular environment of the court and within a clerical milieu, it was becoming fashionable for men and women to exchange verse expressing ideals of friendship and affection. While Robert of Arbrissel condemned the worldliness associated with the count of Anjou, he was not opposed to the development of spiritual friendships between men and women, and accepted Bertrada as a nun of Fontevraud, after the death of Philip I in 1108. In a sermon sent in 1109 to Fulk IV's daughter, Ermengarde (1070–1147), after she had left her husband, Count Alan IV of Brittany (1084–1119), Robert of Arbrissel excoriated hypocrisy in religion, including "the pretence of chastity."[102] Marbod of Rennes, who owed his bishopric to Fulk IV, disliked the boldness with which Robert was flouting tradition, not just by associating with religious women, but by preaching against senior ecclesiastics, like Geoffrey of Mayenne—for whom he was still working as an archdeacon, even after becoming bishop of Rennes.

For unexplained reasons, Robert left Angers in 1095 and gained the support of Rainald, lord of Craon (uncle of Geoffrey of Vendôme) in setting up a community at La Roë. When he returned to preaching in Angers and started to attract many followers, he became a potentially dangerous figure to the ecclesiastical establishment.[103] Marbod was not opposed to Robert's principles, only to his testing the limits of male-female relationships within religious life. Baudri of Bourgueil, by contrast, could see nothing wrong with such interaction, as long as it was conducted within a chaste framework.

On 10 February 1096, only three months after Pope Urban II had launched the first Crusade at Clermont, Robert of Arbrissel preached a sermon in the presence of Pope Urban II at Saint-Nicolas, Angers, at on the occasion of the consecration of a new church and the translation into its nave of the relics of Geoffrey Martel. Whether Robert was engaged by Pope Urban II to preach the first Crusade is contested.[104] Nonetheless, the fact that many buildings at Fontevraud were named after places in the

[100] Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou* (n. 3 above) 122. See also Jean-Hervé Foulon, "Relations entre le papauté et les pays de la Loire jusqu'à la fondation de Fontevraud," *Robert d'Arbrissel* (n. 43 above) 25–70, esp. 49.

[101] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 8 (n. 74 above) 4.186–188, esp. 188: "Femineam mollitiem petulans iuuentus amplectitur; feminisque uiri curiales in omnia lasciuia summopere adulantur."

[102] Ed. Jean de Pétigny, "Lettre inédite de Robert d'Arbrissel à la comtesse Ermengarde," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 15 (1854) 225–235; trans. Venarde 73–79.

[103] On the support given Robert by Rainald of Craon, see Jessee, "Robert d'Arbrissel" (n. 51 above) 226–234.

[104] That Robert was not preaching the Crusade is argued by J. M. B. Porter, "Preacher of the First Crusade? Robert of Arbrissel after the Council of Clermont," *From Clermont to Jerusalem: The Crusades and Crusader Societies, 1095–1500*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Turnhout 1998) 43–53.

Holy Land suggests that he was strongly interested in these events, even if he preferred to emphasize inner simplicity of religion.[105] Records of Saint-Nicolas preserve memory of this sermon, which probably emphasized inner repentance, rather than the call to Crusade.[106]

Geoffrey of Mayenne was eventually ousted as bishop of Angers in 1101 by Rainaud of Martigné in a process which Hildebert of Lavardin (1055–1133), bishop of Le Mans from 1096 to 1125, considered had been engineered by popular elements.[107] Geoffrey of Vendôme (1070–1130), a cousin of Petronilla of Chemillé, was even more explicit in his criticism of the new bishop Rainaud, whom he says was supported "by a certain actress and public woman."[108] It seems unlikely that Geoffrey is referring directly to an actual *mima*; more probably he is berating some prominent female supporter of Rainaud, to whom he thought that Rainaud was too close. Both Hersende and Robert of Arbrissel were strong supporters of Rainaud, who helped establish other new foundations for women, like Nyoiseau, established by his disciple Solomon, in the diocese of Angers.[109] The foundation of Fontevraud, just inside the diocese of Poitiers, also owed much to the support of its reformed minded bishop, Peter II (1087–1115). Moving to Fontevraud enabled Robert to escape from obligations to the bishop of Angers, and thus from Marbod. A charter from 1106 confirms Robert's establishment there of a church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, on a site given by Arimburgis, wife of Wido, and her daughter Adelaïde de Rivière. They were vassals of Walter of Montsoreau, who revoked customs otherwise owed to him at Fontevraud in 1106.[110]

Robert was present at the Council of Poitiers in November 1100, where the duke of Aquitaine was forced to submit to the church and Philip I was excommunicated because of his marriage to Bertrada.[111] By 1104, however, Philip I had been forced to renouce carnal relations with Bertrada. Also in this year, Philip I sent the young Fulk

[105] This theme is very nicely studied by François-Olivier Touati, "Saint-Lazare, Fontevraud, Jerusalem," *Robert d'Arbrissel* (n. 43 above) 199–237.

[106] Belle Stoddard Tuten,. "Politics, Holiness, and Property in Angers, 1080–1130," *French Historical Studies* 24.4 (2001) 601–619, esp. 607; she quotes from an unpublished reconstruction of the lost cartulary of Saint-Nicolas, by Yvonne Labande-Mailfert, "Le cartulaire de l'abbaye de Saint-Nicolas d'Angers," Angers, Archives départementales de Maine-et-Loire, ms. non coté.

[107] Hildebert, *Epistolae* 5, PL 171.212A: "Quippe non elegit te clerus, sed minae populares intrusere renitenti. Ordines tibi desunt; quos in promovendis cognovimus inquirendos." Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou* (n. 3 above) 260–261, suggests that "the ambitious Marbod" played a role in this affair, but without explaining why he should change to supporting Robert of Arbrissel.

[108] Geoffrey of Vendôme, Ep. 3.11, PL 157.114A: "Nos autem quae vidimus et audivimus, nec possumus nec debemus non loqui. In illa siquidem actione, imo vulgi conspiratione, quam pro electione reputatis, lex velut inter arma siluit; vox divina locum non habuit. Totum ibi levitas vindicavit et vanitas, ubi mima quaedam et mulier publica, quae vos garruliter acclamabat, amplius potuit quam plebis maturitas, vel clericalis honestas potuerit. Hinc Ildebertus vir religiosus, qui post metropolitanum in provincia primus erat episcopus, non tacuit; qui a vestra consecratione, licet a suo metropolitano vocatus, seipsum absentavit, et exsecrationem esse potius quam consecrationem apostolica et evangelica veritate praedicavit." Mews, *The Lost Love Letters* (n. 16 above) 68, 325 n.75.

[109] Venarde, *Women's Monasticism* (n. 1 above) 64–66; and Joseph Avril, "Les Fondations, l'organisation et l'évolution des établissements de moniales dans le diocèse d'Angers du XIe au XIIe siècle," *Les Réligieuses en France au XIIIe siècle*, ed. Michel Parisse (Nancy 1983) 34.

[110] Charters nos. 1 and 2, PL 162.1089C–1092C. On Peter of Poitiers, see George T. Beech, "Biography and the Study of Eleventh-Century Society: Bishop Peter II of Poitiers (1087–1115)," *Francia* 7 (1979) 101–121.

[111] Taken from the *Vita* of Bernard of Tiron; trans. Venarde 66–67; Foulon, "Relations" (n. 100 above) 53–54.

(whom Bertrada had taken with her to France in 1092) back to Anjou.[112] The young Fulk, taken prisoner for a while by William of Aquitaine, only inherited Anjou because of the death in 1106 of his step-brother, Geoffrey Martel the younger. Shortly before this, Fulk IV made a significant gift to Fontevraud.[113] After the death of the old count, Fulk V (1109–1142) became a major patron of the abbey, like his step-sister, Ermengarde. Bertrada, then became a nun at Fontevraud, but moved to a new daughter house of the abbey that she established at Hautes-Bruyères in 1112.[114] Bertrada's influence was undoubtedly decisive in promoting the success of Fontevraud, then still under the direction of Hersende, on behalf of Robert.

Sometime around 1106, Geoffrey, abbot of Vendôme from 1092 until his death in 1130, accused Robert of Arbrissel of being too intimate with certain women followers, while being harsh towards others:

> Word has it you permit certain of the women to live with you too intimately, that you quite often speak with them in private, and even that frequently you do not blush to sleep among them at night. In this way, so you claim, you seem to bear worthily the cross of the Holy Savior when you attempt to extinguish fleshly ardor wickedly aroused. ... You speak often in private to certain women, as rumor has it and as we said before, and by lying in bed with them you are tortured in a new kind of martyrdom. With these women you show yourself pleasant in speech and ready in action; you show every kindness, nothing spared. But with others, if ever you speak to them, you always appear too harsh in address, too severe in correction; you actually torture them with hunger and thirst and nakedness, all compassion forsaken.[115]

Geoffrey may have been reporting what he had heard from his cousin, Petronilla of Chemillé, about Robert's close friendship with Hersende.[116] Geoffrey was not opposed in principle to the bringing together of men and women at Fontevraud. He established

[112] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 11 (n. 74 above) 6.76.

[113] On the complex politics of these years, see Guillot, *Le comte d'Anjou* (n. 3 above) 1.118, 123 and 2.269–270; see *Diversorum donationes*, nos. 4–5, PL 162.1097BC. The second charter names Fulk IV giving property with the support of his sons Geoffrey (d. 1106) and Fulk V, in 1106. If the young Fulk was only returned from France, where he was presumably under the care of his mother, Bertrada, in 1104, this donation must have been made between 1104 and 1106.

[114] *Vita altera* 12 (PL 162.1063BC) and 74; trans. Boudet, ed. Dalarun 270 and 295–296; trans. Venarde 32, 66–67. This passage is not by Andrew, but was based on Dufour, *Recueil des actes* (n. 4 above) no. 75, 3.168–169. The information that she was first at Fontevraud comes only from a 19th-c. history of Hautes-Bruyères by Lejeune (itself lost in 1944), using sources also lost.

[115] Geoffrey of Vendôme, Ep. 47, *Oeuvres*, ed. Geneviève Giordanengo (Paris 1996) 148–151; PL 157.182B–183B: "Audivimus enim quoniam circa sexum femineum, quem regendum coepisti, duobus modis altero alteri prorsus contrario te ita sollicitum reddis, quod modo in utroque modum discretionis penitus excedis. Feminarum quasdam, ut dicitur, nimis familiariter tecum habitare permittis, quibus privata verba saepius loqueris, et cum ipsis etiam, et inter ipsas noctu frequenter cubare non erubescis. ... Mulierum quibusdam, sicut fama sparsit, et nos ante diximus, saepe privatim loqueris, et earum accubitu novo quodam martyrii genere cruciaris. Illis siquidem te semper sermone jucundum ostendis, et alacrem actione, omneque genus humanitatis exhibes, nulla servata parcitate. Aliis vero, si quando cum ipsis loqueris, semper locutione nimis durus appares, nimis districtus correctione, illas etiam fame et siti, ac nuditate crucias, omni relicta pietate." Trans. Venarde 104–105 (quoted here).

[116] Daniel Prigent, "Fontevraud au début du XIIe siècle," *Robert d'Arbrissel* (n. 43 above) 275. André Wilmart dated the letter to 1106/7, "La Collection chronologique des écrits de Geoffroy, abbé de Vendôme," *Revue bénédictine* 43 (1931) 239–246, accepted by Dalarun, *L'impossible sainteté* (n. 25 above) 17 n. 3. Kerr dates the letter to ca. 1101, *Religious Life* (n. 26 above) 43.

a community of prayer with them in 1114, and preached on Mary Magdalene.[117] He was more concerned about the potential for division within the community created by close personal friendships. These were the insinuations that Baudri had to counter in his account of Robert's evangelical simplicity.

The Consecration of Petronilla of Chemillé (1115–1149)

By all reports, Robert of Arbrissel was one of the great preachers of his age, traveling as far as Cadouin in the Perigueux, where he was given territory by its bishop.[118] Robert succeeded in attaching some twenty daughter houses to Fontevraud by the time of his death in February 1116. A simple community of religious men and women was transforming into a large and prosperous organization. This process accelerated after Robert decided to appoint Petronilla, a widow and niece of the lord of Craon, as its first abbess, in September 1115. Unlike Hersende, Petronilla had been a *conversa*, in other words not subject to strict rules of enclosure. While Robert acknowledged that traditionally a virgin should watch over virgins, he argued that someone not experienced in the ways of the world could not adequately lead the community, a Martha rather than a Mary. What tipped the scale was Robert's recollection of a precedent established by Pope Urban II that a woman who had been married four times subsequently acquired such a rank.[119] Robert insisted that in the future, the abbess should always be a *conversa* rather than a consecrated nun, as he knew "that many monasteries were destroyed through the negligence and inexperience of abbesses raised in the cloister."[120] Robert's edict challenged the notion that an abbess should be a consecrated virgin. This practice would not continue after Petronilla's death in 1149, when she was succeeded by Mathilda, daughter of Fulk V, count of Anjou, and an enclosed nun at Fontevraud.

Much of Andrew's *Vita altera* is devoted to a debate about where Robert would be buried. Andrew reports a sermon in which Robert acknowledged that all the faithful ought to venerate and decorate Bethlehem and Jerusalem, but insisted that he wished to be buried in the simplicity of Fontevraud, alongside his early followers, male and female. In particular, Andrew singles out Robert's statement: "There lies the *monacha* Hersindis, my good co-helper, by whose planning and effort I constructed the buildings of Fontevraud."[121] After Robert died at Orsan, in the diocese of Bourges, there was a sharp difference of opinion as to whether his body should remain at Orsan or be transferred to Fontevraud. Andrew presents Petronilla in heroic light, in insisting on the return of Robert's corpse. He also explains that it was through the pressure of various ecclesiastical dignitaries that Robert was buried, not in the cemetery alongside

[117] Geoffrey of Vendôme, *Oeuvres* 131–139; see François-Olivier Touati, "Saint-Lazare, Fontevraud, Jerusalem," *Robert d'Arbrissel* (n. 43 above) 228–229.

[118] Robert subsequently gave this property to a fellow hermit from La Roë, Gerard of Sales (ca. 1070–1120). In 1119, this community subsequently attached itself to the nascent Cistercian *ordo*. *Diversorum donationes*, no. 2, PL 162.1095C–1096B.

[119] *Vita altera* 6–8, PL 162.1059D–1061C; trans. Venarde 28–30, esp. 267–268.

[120] *Vita altera* 20, PL 162.1062A: "Noverat sane vir sanctus quod multae Ecclesiae sunt dissipatae propter incuriam et imperitiam abbatissarum, quae in claustris sunt eductae."

[121] *Vita altera* 6, PL 162.1074A: "Ibi jacet Hersindis monacha, bona coadjutrix mea, cujus consilio et opere construxi Fontis Evraldi aedificia." Trans. Boudet, ed. Dalarun 281; trans. Venarde 45.

Hersende and his early brothers and sisters, as he wished, but in a place of honor in the main church.[122] There may well be a subtle critique here of developments that had taken place since Robert's death. The story neatly encapsulates the transformation experienced by Fontevraud during Robert's own lifetime.

In the early days of the community, Robert seems to have developed a set of statutes (referred to as a *regula sanctimonialium*), which imposed strict silence on the cloistered nuns, simplicity of clothing, no meat, and instructed both students and their female teachers always to be watched over by one of the older *conversae*.[123] There is no explicit statement that the women were to follow the Benedictine Rule, although in the *Vita altera* Andrew refers to the authority (*magisterium*) of St. Benedict to support Robert's insistence that neither brothers nor sisters should be blamed for wearing simple, undyed clothes.[124] Guy Lobrichon has pointed out an uncertainty in vocabulary in early charters, one of which (from before 1108) records a gift *domino Roberto et canonicabus Fontis Evraudi*. Subsequently the terms *monachae* or *sanctimoniales* become more common.[125] By the thirteenth century the nuns would certainly see themselves as following the Rule of Benedict, while the brothers followed the Rule of Augustine.[126] This was not an unusual situation in houses that combined both nuns and brothers. Gilbert of Sempringham (ca. 1093–1189) would later establish a community in England in which the nuns followed a Benedictine way of life, while brothers followed the Rule of Augustine. Gilbert's attempted fusion highlights the difficulties associated with bringing together men and women in a common way of life.[127]

Although men lived separately from women at Fontevraud, Robert's willingness to challenge traditional gender boundaries is vividly illustrated in a story reported by Andrew that he had once apparently refused to accept the claim of the doorkeepers of a church in the Auvergne, Menelay l'Abbaye, that women could not enter such a sacred space, and that if any did so, they would die. Robert rebuked them, declaring that it was contrary to the Gospel passage: "concerning the blessed sinful woman who kissed the feet of the Redeemer, washed them with her tears, dried them with her hair, and poured ointment on His very worthy head. And who dares to say that there should be any church into which a woman is not permitted entry, if she be not forbidden by reason of faults and things?"[128] Mary Magdalene provided evangelical authority for redefining the boundaries of gender. In telling the story, Andrew was reminding both monks and nuns of Fontevraud about Robert's ideals, and perhaps also making an implicit criticism about the way values had changed since those early days.

[122] *Vita altera* 67–68; trans. Boudet, ed. Dalarun 295–296; trans. Venarde 63.

[123] The *regula sanctimonialium* was mentioned in the charter of Peter of Poitiers in 1106, PL 162.1091A.

[124] *Vita altera* 10, PL 162.1062C: "ut juxta S. Benedicti magisterium, neque fratres neque sorores nostrae inculparentur de nativo vestimentorum colore, vel grossitate, aut latitudine."

[125] Lobrichon, *Heloïse* (n. 17 above) 263, quoting the use of *canonicabus* in *GC* 15 (no. 19).

[126] See Kerr, *Religious Life* (n. 26 above) 52–57, who argues that it is likely the women followed the Rule of Benedict from the outset.

[127] Janet Sorrentino, "In Houses of Nuns, in Houses of Canons: A Liturgical Dimension to Double Monasteries" *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002) 361–372.

[128] *Vita altera* 71–72; trans. Boudet, ed. Dalarun 297–296; trans. Venarde 65–66; see also Dalarun, *L'impossible sainteté* (n. 25 above) 183–189.

In encouraging devotion to Mary Magdalene, Robert was emulating St. Anselm, who had established an oratory in her honor 1097–1100. Hugh of Cluny (d. 1109), who praised Mary Magdalene as "apostle of the apostles," had already started to develop her cult at Vezelay and Cluny in the late eleventh century.[129] Nonetheless, Fontevraud would contribute to the growth in popularity of her cult. The major monastic church at Fontevraud was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and that of the priests to St. John, while there were also separate churches dedicated to Mary Magdalene and Lazarus, probably for *conversi* and *conversae*.[130] Petronilla presided over the completion of Hersende's project of building the new abbey, where there came to be enforced a rigorous separation between the communities of women and men. The physical architecture of the new church ensured that the reports of excessive interaction between men and women at Fontevraud would soon be forgotten.[131]

Fulbert, Abelard, and the Young Heloise

Heloise was raised at Argenteuil in a privileged environment, very similar to that of the young women of Le Ronceray with whom Baudri of Bourgueil engaged in literary dialogue. Through writings like the *Carmina* of Baudri, and quite possibly other texts still to be identified, she would have become familiar with a literary milieu in which it was quite acceptable for educated women to participate in literary exchange with other monks and clerics. Heloise was brought up in a privileged milieu in which it was possible for educated men and women to engage in literary dialogue, drawing on classical authors as much on Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. In different ways, the poems of Baudri and the *Liber confortatorius* of Goscelin of Saint-Bertin show how it was possible to articulate a desire for intimacy within the constraints of religious life. Through his poems, Baudri helped legitimize the notion that women and women could all talk about ideal love and friendship, while respecting values of chastity and continence, deeply held within ascetic tradition. Heloise may well have gained from Baudri fascination with the *Heroides* of Ovid and a sense that Ovidian reflection on love was not inconsistent with valuing interiority over external form. Marbod may have encouraged the writing of verse more worldly and *risqué* in character, but this did not necessarily mean that it was incompatible with the teaching of a respectable archdeacon at Angers. Guibert of Nogent (ca. 1055–1125) himself mentions that after he was abandoned by his mother to a monastery, he started to compose Ovidian poems that he

[129] The development of devotion to Mary Magdalene in the 12th c. is a vast topic. See for example the central work of Jacques Dalarun, "La Madeleine dans l'Ouest de la France au tournant des XIe–XIIe siècles," *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen Age* 104.1 (1992) 71–119. Katherine Ludwig Jansen notes the prominent role played by Cluny in *The Making of the Magdalen. Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton 2000) 52–53, 62–63. The phrase *apostola apostolorum* is used in a sermon of abbot Hugh of Semur (d. 1109), PL 159.952. It may derive from a comment of Jerome about the women who visited the tomb of Jesus, *Commentarii in prophetas minores. In Sophoniam prophetam*, Prol., ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 76A (Turnhout 1970) 655: "mihi tantum, quia aliud operis incumbit, in fine prologi dixisse sufficiat, dominum resurgentem primum apparuisse mulieribus, et apostolorum illas fuisse apostolas, ut erubescerent uiri non quaerere, quem iam fragilior sexus inuenerat."

[130] *Vita altera* 11, 66; PL 162.1063A; trans. Boudet, ed. Dalarun 269, 295; trans. Venarde 31, 62–63.

[131] Loraine N. Simmons, "The Abbey Church at Fontevraud in the Later Twelfth Century: Anxiety, Authority and Architecture in the Female Spiritual Life," *Gesta* 31.2 (1994) 99–107.

recited to fellow monks.[132] Such literary experimentation was probably not uncommon. If such poems survive, they are invariably transmitted anonymously.

Fulbert's invitation to Abelard that he become a tutor for Heloise is often interpreted as the naïve foolishness of an old man. Yet if we identify him as a brother or step-brother of Hersende, with close connections to Angevin culture through Bertrada of Montfort, his enthusiasm for Heloise's education becomes more comprehensible. His reading of Baudri may have led Fulbert to think that it was quite reasonable for Abelard to develop a friendship with Heloise. Before his attitudes towards Abelard changed so radically, Fulbert seems to have shared the same attitudes as Baudri of Bourgueil in admiring the potential for women to be educated, and to engage in a healthy relationship with a male teacher. In exchanging letters with her teacher, the young Heloise may have thought of herself as continuing a similar kind of literary dialogue as Baudri of Bourgueil developed with Constance and his other friends. By allowing such a relationship to develop into a full-blown affair, however, Abelard helped provoke a new attitude of suspicon about the dangers of transgressing gender boundaries in this way.

As Könsgen first observed in 1974, the *Epistolae duorum amantium*, recording over one hundred letters and poems between a famous master, skilled in the vocabulary of dialectic, and his female brilliant student of philosophy, display many parallels to the situation of Abelard and Heloise, as described in the *Historia calamitatum*. As I have argued elsewhere, it is not just the situation of these two lovers that echoes that of Abelard and Heloise, but specific vocabulary, such as when the young woman proclaims that even if she had a droplet of his knowability (*guttula scibilitatis*), she could not find a word to adequately describe her love for him.[133] Both lovers draw on Ciceronian ideals to describe their love, but in different ways. When analysing these letters in 1999, I had not realized that the sentence from Cicero's *De amicitia* to which the male lover alludes in letter 24 is the one passage from this work that Abelard includes in the *Sic et Non* (138.21) to discuss the question whether *caritas*, once acquired could ever be lost. When debating the character of *amor* in letter 24, the teacher draws on this passage of Cicero to argue that love is something which already exists between themselves alone, as the only true *res universalis*.[134] By contrast, the young woman develops a more transcendent ideal of love in letter 25, picking up on the Ciceronian theme that true love is not pursued for the sake of any material reward, and that it is an obligation to be striven for, rather than an ideal already achieved. Not only does she transform specific technical vocabulary unique to Abelard (like *scibilitas*), but she anticipates his theory of ethical intention in her emphasis on the purity of intention. Könsgen has identified occasional literary allusions in the young man's letters to the erotic verse of Marbod of Rennes. By contrast, the young woman explicitly compares herself to Ovid's heroines in the *Heroides*, yearning for her lover, just as Baudri had done in his *Carmina*.[135] She repeats Baudri's application of the image of

[132] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie* 1.17, ed. E.-R. Labande (Paris 1982) 136–138.

[133] Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (n. 14 above) 70–71.

[134] Ibid. 68.

[135] Könsgen identified these allusions to verses of Marbod in his critical edition, the *Epistolae duorum amantium. Briefe Abaelards und Heloises?* (Leiden 1974) 94–95, allusions that encouraged him to date

Bezaliel, who constructed the tabernacle, to that of any literary artist.[136] From the woman's point of view, these letters transgress traditional gender boundaries by declaring that an intimate friendship, modeled on Ciceronian values of *amicitia*, but between a man and woman is possible. The constraints afforded by conventional monasticism are missing, as the two lovers believe that they can create an interior space of true intimacy. For the young woman in these letters, God watches over her *amor* for her beloved, a passion that is fully integrated with *dilectio*, a love that has a spiritual foundation. In wishing to combining the ideals of the *Heroides* with Ciceronian ideals of friendship, she transgresses traditional boundaries of gender, perhaps under the influence of writers like Baudri of Bourgueil.[137]

Roscelin, Abelard, and the Arguments about Robert of Arbrissel

As is well known from the *Historia calamitatum*, Abelard did not live up to the expectations of Fulbert in his relationship with Heloise. Once enthusiastic for Heloise to be educated in classical letters like other the noble young women of Le Ronceray, Fulbert turned sharply against Abelard, for having transgressed the boundaries of gender in teaching his young student. Whereas Baudri of Bourgueil presented his relationship to Constance as one of playful literary intercourse, within the confines of religious chastity, Abelard pushed Heloise into sexual liaison. In consequence, Fulbert had Abelard castrated. His reaction against Abelard provoked a significant shift in his sympathies, away from the cultural sophistication associated with Orléans and Baudri of Bourgueil to believing that Abelard needed to be punished for his transgression.

The letter that Roscelin of Compiègne sent to Peter Abelard in around 1119/20 contains a range of accusations against his former student, the most important of which are theological. Roscelin's taunting of Abelard over his seduction of Heloise and the punishment he had experienced are often taken as elements of a malicious personality. Yet in a sense they reflect a broader, probably quite widespread perception, that Abelard had transgressed the necessary boundaries expected of a teacher. Roscelin's comment that he had seen Robert encouraging women to abandon their husbands for the sake of the religious life, against the wishes of the bishop of Angers, hints at an ongoing source of friction between the diocese of Poitiers, in which Fontevraud stood, and Angers, where Robert was active in preaching in the 1090s.[138]

This treatise of Roscelin and thus Abelard's riposte to the canons of Saint-Martin of Tours, may also be related to a significant property dispute between Saint-Martin and Fontevraud, not settled until October 1119. Bertrada, who died at Hautes-Bruyères in late 1115 or early 1116, had bequeathed to Fontevraud land of Saint-Martin that she had been given by Philip I in 1093 as her dower, land that was technically at her disposal for as long as she was alive. Although Pope Callixtus approved the bequest to

these letters (without pronouncing firmly on their authorship) to the first half of the 12th c. There are explicit allusions to the *Heroides* in the woman's letter 45 (ed. Könsgen 24). See also Mews, *The Lost Love Letters* (n. 16 above) 87–104.

[136] *Carmina*, ed. Tilliette 1, no. 1, line 119: "Hunc quia callebat, qua Beseleel similabat." Cf. Ep. 27, ed. Könsgen 17: "Oculo suo Bezelielis spiritum ..."

[137] Baudri refers to sermons that have not survived in *Carmina*, ed. Tilliette 1, no. 1, line 59.

[138] See n. 6 above.

Fontevraud on 15 September 1119, saying that the land had been given as a dower (*in dote*) by Philip, and was therefore hers to give to the abbey, Louis VI effectively reversed this decision a month later (5–8 October 1119), granting the land back to Saint-Martin of Tours.[139] Bertrada had been forced to separate from Philip I in 1104, and reportedly became a nun at Fontevraud after Philip's death in 1108. In around 1112, she moved to her own foundation of Hautes-Bruyères. Continuing to style herself queen of France, she used her own seal in a charter of 1115 (the first such seal known to have been used by a woman in France).[140] Bertrada's decision to become a nun at Fontevraud after the death of Philip I was a major event that helped transform a relatively unstructured community into a wealthy abbey, with important connections to nobility. Bertrada's son, the new count of Anjou, would then start to make significant bequests to the abbey. Roscelin's venom towardst Robert of Arbrissel echoes the bitterness of some canons of St. Martin towards Fontevraud, with whom they were in litigation. Paradoxically, Abelard sympathized with the potential problems that could arise when the role of abbess was taken over by the great nobility of the land.

Roscelin's comment that Abelard used a seal, which he claimed showed the head of a man and a woman, also deserves comment.[141] Whatever the original seal that Abelard was using (perhaps a combined image of the bearded Rusticus and unbearded Eleutherius, companions of St. Denis), Roscelin construed the seal as an image of a man and a woman, and as a sign that even in monastic life he was blurring traditional gender boundaries. The first known use of a woman having her own seal occurs in Bertrada's charter for Marmoutiers issued in 1115. Her misuse of Philip's seal for private ends in 1101 had been condemned by Orderic Vitalis. This use of a private seal was picked up by Adelaide, the queen of Louis VI, when she became a widow in 1137.[142] Adela of Blois used her own seal, certainly after her retirement from public life in 1107, if not before.[143] Using a seal enabled a man and a woman to communicate privately. It testifies to the novelty of this practice that Roscelin should suspect that Abelard's seal testified to an improper relationship between a man and a woman.

[139] Dufour, *Recueil des Actes* (n. 4 above) no. 153, 3.317–318; Louis VI conceded various rights to Saint-Martin in October 1119, presumably by way of compromise, no. 155, 3.319–321. Theodore Evergates argues that while it was traditional for husbands to assign dower revenue to their wives on marriage, the first case where a dower land is conferred is in 1157 in the case of Ivo of Nesle and in the 1170s, by Theobald III of Blois, *Feudal Society in Medieval France. Documents from the County of Champagne* (Philadelphia 1993) 58; and "Aristocratic Women in the County of Champagne," in *Aristocratic Women* (n. 78 above) 90–97. Yet the 1119 bull of Callixtus (no. 153), clearly states that Philip gave land as a dower (*in dote*) to Bertrada, even though the reversal of this decision by Louis VI in October 1119 simply speaks of land being given to Bertrada by Philip, and thus rightfully returning to Saint-Martin (effectively disenfranchising Fontevraud).

[140] This seal, known from a 17th-c. copy, is discussed by Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, "Women, Seals and Power in Medieval France, 1150–1350," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Elder and Mary-Ann Kowalewski (Athens, GA 1988) 61–82, esp. 63–64. On the growth in the use of seals in the 12th c., see Jean-Luc Chassel, "L'usage du sceau au XIIe siècle," *Le XIIe siècle. Mutations et renouveau en France dans la première moitié du XIIe siècle*, ed. Françoise Gasparri (Paris 1994) 61–90.

[141] See n. 7 above above n.7.

[142] Bedos-Rezak, "Women, Seals and Power" (n. 140 above) 64.

[143] Kimberly A. LoPrete, "Adela of Blois: Familial Alliances and Female Lordship," *Aristocratic Women* (n. 78 above) 22. Stephen's two, very personal letters to Adela, from 1097 and 1099, are edited by Heinrich Hagenmeyer, *Epistulae et chartae ad historiam primi belli sacri spectantes: die Kreuzzugsbriefe aus den Jahren 1088–1100* (Hildesheim 1973) 138–140, 149–152.

While very few personal seals survive from this period, this comment of Roscelin, combined with an allusion in the *Epistolae duorum amantium*, suggests that Abelard used a personal seal in all his correspondence, including his early messages to Heloise, even if sent on wax tablets.[144]

In 1122, a highly literate nun from Argenteuil (Heloise?) penned a poetic lament for the mortuary roll of Vital of Mortain (d. 16 September 1122), who founded the abbey of Savigny in 1112:

Flet pastore pio grex desolatus adempto;
Soletur miseras turba fidelis oves.
Proh dolor! hunc morsu sublatum mortis edaci,
Non dolor aut gemitus vivificare queunt.
Ergo quid lacrime? Quid tot tantique dolores
Prosunt? Nil prodest hic dolor, imo nocet.
Sed licet utilitas ex fletu nulla sequatur,
Est tamen humanum morte dolere patris,
Est etiam gaudere pium, si vis rationis
Tristitie vires adnichilare queat.
Mors etenim talis, non mors sed vita putatur
Nam moritur mundo, vivit et ipse Deo.
Ores pro nobis; omnes oramus ut ipse
Et nos ad vitam [*above the line:* Christum] perveniamus. Amen.[145]

[The deserted flock weeps over the shepherd who has been taken away; / let the faithful multitude comfort the miserable sheep. / What sorrow! Neither sorrow nor groans can restore to life / one taken away by the devouring jaws of death. / Therefore why should there be tears? What use so much and so widespread sorrow? / Sorrow here is good for nothing, rather it harms. / But although nothing useful follows from mourning, / it is human, however, to mourn the death of a father; / it is also pious to rejoice, if the force of reason / is able to annihilate the powers of sadness. / For such a death is thought not to be death, but life. / For he dies to the world, living himself for God. / May you pray for us; we all pray that he and we ourselves / may come to life (*above the line:* to Christ). Amen.]

This poetic reflection on the human character of loss is very different from most of the other poems in the mortuary roll, many of which are more trite in character. Like Robert of Arbrissel, Vital of Savigny was much concerned with reinvigorating religious life for women as much as men.[146] Orderic Vitalis (who never mentions Robert of Arbrissel) gives a vivid account of how Vital "spared neither rich nor poor in his public sermons" and "caused wealthy ladies delicately clad in silk garments and fine lambskins to tremble when he attacked their sins with the sword of God's word."[147]

[144] In the *Epistolae duorum amantium* 20, no. 38, the man concludes: "Iam facio finem concludens ista sigillo."

[145] The lament was edited by Léopold Delisle, "Des documents paléographiques concernant l'usage de prier pour les morts," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, 2[e] ser. 3 (1846) 361–411; and more fully in *Rouleaux des morts du IX[e] au XV[e] siècle* (Paris 1866) 299; and *Rouleau mortuaire du B. Vital, abbé de Savigny* (Paris 1909) 22–24.

[146] See Marbod, Ep. 4, PL 171.1474AB.

[147] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 8 (n. 74 above) 4.332. The chronology of the foundation of Savigny and Neufbourg (redated to 1115, rather than to 1105) is considered by Jacqueline Buhot, "L'abbaye normande de Savigny, chef d'ordre et fille de Cîteaux," *Le Moyen Age* ser. 3, 7 (1936) 1–19, 104–121, 178–190, 249–272.

His sermons were described by Baudri as having the eloquence of Cicero and Orpheus.[148] Orderic observed that rather than follow the *ritus Cluniacensium* he followed the *modernas institutiones neophistorum*, a veiled allusion to the monks of Cîteaux. Vital differed from the Cistercians, however, in dedicating his monastery to the Holy Trinity (perhaps inspiring Abelard's initial dedication of his oratory), rather than to the Virgin Mary. While Orderic spoke respectfully about Vital and Bernard of Tiron, who left his abbey at Saint-Cyprian, Poitiers to establish a community for both men and women at Tiron, near Chartres, he did not think them better than the monks of old, and never mentioned Robert of Arbrissel.[149] Heloise's interest in interior religion, and distrust of religious hypocrisy, very evident in her third famous letter to Abelard, was stimulated by her admiration for preachers like Robert of Arbrissel and Vital of Mortain and their emphasis on inner rather than external virtue.

Abelard and Robert of Arbrissel

In presenting his earlier life in the *Historia calamitatum*, Abelard echoes what Baudri has to say about Robert of Arbrissel. Neglecting to mention that he had been a student of Roscelin at Loches, he implicitly compares himself to Robert of Arbrissel, coming from the edges of Brittany and "wandering through different provinces studying dialectic" before he arrives in Paris. Although the details of his life were different, Abelard sees his life as following that of Robert, in so far as he was led by the Holy Spirit to establish an experimental community that would become an established monastic foundation. The fact that Abelard addresses his treatise to an unidentified male friend reveals how he did not want to be seen as transgressing traditional gender boundaries. He may well have intended the *Historia calamitatum* to reach Heloise, as the friend in distress, to inspire her with the example of how he had overcome many difficulties. His theme was that anyone undergoing difficulty to take inspiration from the example of how he had overcome many calamities. The narrative effectively provides an *apologia* for the Paraclete, justifying the significance of its initial foundation. He may have directed it to an unidentified friend as a rhetorical device by which he could communicate with Heloise, while avoiding the impression that he was too intimate with her. Abelard down-played the extent of their communication in the past, talking about their previous exchange of messages as simply a device by which he could seduce Heloise. She, by contrast, gave much greater weight to those early declarations of love, and wanted to speak to him, not just as an abbot, but as an individual to an individual. This was not because she rejected out of hand the monastic values that he sought to introduce but because she valued those ideals of authenticity promoted by Robert of Arbrissel, rejecting false profession of outward chastity as hypocritical.

Abelard uses his account to make pointed criticism of other monastic communities, which he contrasts unfavorably to the Paraclete, originally dedicated to the Holy Trinity (echoing the practice of Vital of Savigny).[150] The standard monastic practice, continued by the Cistercians, was to put themselves under the patronage of the Virgin

[148] Baudri, *Carmina*, ed. Hilberg (n. 41 above) 262, no. 195.14.
[149] Orderic, *Ecclesiastical History* 8 (n. 74 above) 4.332.
[150] Buhot, "L'abbaye normande de Savigny" (n. 147 above) 111.

Mary. Abelard felt obliged to defend his decision to rededicate the community to the Paraclete. St. Paul taught that we ourselves ought to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. There was a subtle shift here away from the notion that the Virgin, free from sexual impurity, was the only one fully dedicated to the Spirit, to the sense that we should all devote our lives to the Spirit.

Abelard relates how the experiment fell into abeyance (between 1127 and 1129), and he was forced to accept a position as abbot of Saint-Gildas, until he invited Heloise to take over the Paraclete, after she and her nuns had been expelled by Suger from Argenteuil. He devotes many pages of his account to explaining why he started to do more for the young community, only to confront criticism from those who thought he was still driven by last. At one level, Abelard did not wish to appear to transgress those boundaries that society imposed on a monk. On the other hand, he was very aware of the long scriptural precedent for men taking responsibility for pastoral care for women, as long as there was no sexual scandal. In his life of Robert of Arbrissel, Baudri had taken for granted that this was a legitimate religious vocation. In the *Historia calamitatum*, Abelard provides his readers, in particular Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete, with learned authority for taking such a path.

In his letter 7 and Rule for the Paraclete, Abelard formulates the idea more clearly that *abbatissa* was a contradiction in terms, as *abba* meant Father, not mother: "What we now call abbesses whom antiquity used to called *diaconissas* as if they were ministers rather than mothers."[151] He prefers the scripturally sanctioned term *diaconissa*, to describe Heloise's status. In the Rule, he draws extensively on scriptural precedent to define her role. He laments the situation of choosing those who are virgins, often younger in years, rather than older women who had been married, to occupy this position of responsibility.[152] Abelard is particularly hostile to the appointment of powerful noble women to such a position, because they become inflated with pride.[153] The deaconess should be concerned with spiritual rather than material issues, which should be the concern of men: "We wish monasteries of women always to be subject to monasteries of women, so that the brothers can take care of the sisters, and that one man may preside over them like a father."[154] Abelard's perception that women have a spiritual role, while that of the brothers is to do manual work, echoes precisely the division the driving assumption at Fontevraud, during the time that authority was vested with Robert as *magister*. To avoid stronger men putting pressure on women, he insists they should do nothing against the will of the deaconess. Final responsibility, however, rests with the *praepositus* or abbot.

As Lobrichon has argued, Heloise was never happy with this arrangement. By 1135, the charters of the Paraclete show that Heloise was adopting the rank and status of *abbatissa*. While there was a small group of brothers attached to the Paraclete, they

[151] Letter 7, PL 178.238D–239A; Abelard, Rule, ed. T. P. McLaughlin, "Abelard's Rule for Religious Women," *Mediaeval Studies* 18 (1956) 241–292, esp. 267; this letter is translated by Vera Morton, in *Guidance for Women in 12th-Century Convents* (Woodbridge 2003) 52–95, esp. 70.

[152] Letter 8, ed. Pagani 516: "Unde non mediocriter miramur quomodo perniciosa haec in Ecclesiastica consuetudo inolevit ut quae virgines sunt potius quam quae viros cognoverunt ad hoc eliganter et frequenter iuniores senioribus praeficiantur."

[153] Letter 8, ed. Pagani 518.

[154] Letter 8, ed. Pagani 538.

were all answerable to Heloise. In practice, the Paraclete under Heloise adopted the practice followed at Fontevraud after the consecration of Petronilla in 1115. Abelard remained loyal to an idealized memory of the way of life that Robert of Arbrissel had sought to maintain at Fontevraud prior to that time.

This was only one of many ways in which Heloise did not follow the precepts that Abelard laid down in his proposed Rule for the Paraclete. In the *Institutiones nostrae*, which follow Abelard's Rule in the Troyes MS 802, but are much simpler and easier to follow, there is very little direct allusion to Abelard's Rule. As Chrysogonus Waddell has shown, the dominant influence on the Paraclete statutes is a very early version of the monastic observances of Cîteaux, as they existed prior to the major reforms of 1147, prompted by the fusion of the order of Savigny with that of Cîteaux.[155] In adapting for her own use rules formulated by the early Cistercians, Heloise was doing no more than Vital of Savigny, who similarly adapted practices of the early Cistercians for his own community. Unlike the early Cistercian observances, however, based on the Rule of Benedict, the *Institutiones nostrae* are presented as "taking their fabric from the teaching of Christ, who preached and practiced poverty, humility, and obedience. We follow the paths of the apostles' living in common." In rhyming prose, they explain that "since we have renounced the world and fight for God, we persist in the vow of chastity, and strive to please him according to the measure of his gift."[156] These institutes seem to have been drawn up for the foundation an early daughter-house of the Paraclete, quite possibly that of Trainel, dedicated ca. 1142 to Mary Magdalene, "so that what the mother holds unchangingly, the daughters may keep uniformly."[157]

This principle that there should be a common practice followed by all nuns of the Paraclete echoes a core principle of the early observances of the Cistercian order, appended as *capitula* to the *Exordium Cistercii* and *Summa cartae caritatis*, texts that provide a short history of the events leading up to the foundation of Cîteaux by monks of Molesme in 1098.[158] Constance Berman has argued that the Cistercian foundation myth, as told in the *Carta caritatis* (a version was approved by Pope Callixtus II in December 1119) was only constructed after the death of Bernard of Clairvaux in 1153.[159] Yet Bernard's involvement in matters relating to the *ordo* as a whole in the 1120s, leaves little doubt that from any early stage the early Cistercians were concerned to lead a common way of life, held together not by submission to a single ab-

[155] Chrysogonus Waddell, *The Paraclete Statutes: Institutiones Nostrae*, Cistercian Liturgical Studies 20 (Cîteaux 1987).

[156] PL 178.313A: "Institutiones [Duchesne: *Instructiones*] nostrae sumunt exordium a doctrina Christi praedicantis, et tenentis paupertatem, humilitatem et obedientiam. Sequimur autem vestigia apostolorum in commune viventium. … Et quoniam seculo abrenuntiamus, et Deo militamus, persistamus in proposito castitatis, et pro viribus nostris juxta mensuram donationis suae ei placere contendamus."

[157] On the priory of Mary Magdalene, see *Cartulaire du Paraclet*, no. 44, ed. Lalore (n. 12 above) 65–66. Although this charter dates soon after 1146, approval for the priory must have been in 1142.

[158] These capitula are edited alongside the *Exordium Cistercii and Summa cartae caritatis* by Chrysogonus Waddell, *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, Studia et documenta 9 (Cîteaux 1999) 186–191, and with an English translation and commentary 407–413.

[159] Constance Berman, *The Cistercian Evolution: The Invention of a Religious Order In Twelfth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia 2000). Waddell provides text and translation of the papal confirmation of 1119 in *Narrative and Legislative Texts* 450–453.

bot, but to a *carta caritatis*.[160] The Cistercian statutes are more complex than those of the Paraclete, in laying down the principle that all abbots following the mother church of Cîteaux should meet annually to establish common practice. There was no need for such organization at the Paraclete. Its core statutes, such as about simplicity of clothing and the absence of meet from the diet, echo Cistercian wording, while they did not include the distinctively Cistercian prohibition on women living alongside monks.[161]

A further illustration of Cistercian influence on the Paraclete may be seen in a foundation charter of La Pommeraye from 1147. Founded at the request of Mathilda, countess of Blois (who was eventually buried at La Pommeraye), Heloise granted that there would be a canonically elected abbess who would visit the Paraclete once a year, while the abbess of the Paraclete would do the reverse.[162] Whereas all daughter houses of Fontevraud were subject to its abbess, Heloise was willing to create a daughter house with its own abbess, similar in rank to herself—the same model as followed within the Cistercian *ordo*.

While women could not live alongside monks in the Cistercian *ordo*, there were many monastic foundations of women which emulated their observances and liturgical practices.[163] Waddell's discovery of Cistercian influences on the Paraclete statutes paralleled his wider observation that the liturgy of the Paraclete drew to a significant extent on the early Cistercian hymnal, without being confined by its very strict interpretation of what constituted an authentically "Ambrosian" hymn. Heloise created an original liturgical synthesis at the Paraclete, extending the rather narrow range of Cistercian hymns with others specially composed by Peter Abelard. Like the Cistercians, Heloise wished to pursue an authentic religious life, but without being confined by strict fidelity to the Rule of Benedict.[164] In her letter to Abelard complaining about much liturgical practice, she had lamented that there were not hymns for women who were neither virgins nor martyrs, a clear allusion to Mary Magdalene. In the liturgical synthesis developed at the Paraclete, Mary Magdalene was given a place of honor, not least in the sequence *Epithalamica*, presented as an erotic Easter dialogue between Mary Magdalene, seeking for her beloved, and the risen Christ.[165] *Epithalamica* is part of a larger Easter play, *The three Maries*, which David Wulstan has attributed to Heloise.[166]

[160] Michael Casey, "Bernard and the Crisis at Morimond. Did the Order Exist in 1124?" *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 38 (2003) 119–175.

[161] *Capitula*, no. 17, ed. Waddell (n. 158 above) 411: "Quod in ordine nostro cohabitatio feminarum interdicta sit."

[162] *Cartulaire du Paraclet*, ed. Lalore (n. 12 above) 71–73, no. 53, and translated by Theodore Evergates, *Feudal Society in Medieval France. Documents from the County of Champagne* (Philadelphia 1993) 62–64, no. 44.

[163] Constance Berman, "Were There Twelfth-Century Cistercian Nuns?," *Church History* 68 (1999) 824–864.

[164] For further discussion, see Mews, "Heloise and Liturgical Experience at the Paraclete," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 11.1 (2002) 25–35; and "Liturgy and Identity at the Paraclete: Heloise, Abelard and the Evolution of Cistercian Reform," *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard*, ed. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan (Ottawa 2003) 19–33.

[165] The sequence was attributed to Abelard by Chrysogonus Waddell "Epithalamica: An Easter Sequence by Peter Abelard." *The Musical Quarterly* 72 (1986) 239–271.

[166] David Wulstan attributes *Epithalamica* and the Easter plays, preserved in a manuscript of Vic, to Heloise, "Heloise at Argenteuil and the Paraclete," *The Poetic and Musical Legacy* (n. 164 above) 67–88

CONCLUSION

By 1140, the Paraclete had become an established community, and had spawned the first a daughter house at Trainel, dedicated to Mary Magdalene. The community could not compete in scale with Fontevraud, so closely identified with the Counts of Anjou. Abelard probably did not wish to see the abbess of the Paraclete become as powerful as Petronilla, first abbess of Fontevraud. Yet Abelard was never as effective as Heloise in negotiating an effective management structure for the Paraclete. He looked back to the early years of Robert's foundation of Fontevraud as providing an ideal arrangement, in which authority was vested with himself as a *magister*, while the community looked to a senior, respected woman, whom Abelard preferred to call *diaconissa*. Heloise understood that if her community was to survive, then she had to govern the community as abbess, in the same way that Petronilla governed Fontevraud.

Robl's argument that Hersende, first prioress of Fontevraud and a woman with powerful Montmorency family connections, is the same person as Hersende, mother of Heloise, is quite plausible, given the various coincidences that he has identified. His hypothesis that Hersende gave birth to Heloise outside of wedlock is less certain. Hersende could have remarried after the death of William of Montsoreau in 1087, and have given birth to Heloise in around 1094, before being widowed again. Whatever the case, Hersende decided to become a follower of Robert of Arbrissel, initially as a *conversa*, and then a fully enclosed nun at Fontevraud, an abbey that she helped build on land adjoining the Montsoreau estate. Hersende was pivotal in helping Robert move from the diocese of Angers, where he was perceived by Marbod as a potentially dangerous preacher, to the more welcoming diocese of Poitiers, where Fontevraud was located.

Sometime before 1101, Hersende, mother of Heloise, entrusted her young child to the abbey of Argenteuil, traditionally protected by the Montmorency family (from whom Hersende of Fontevraud could claim descent). Fulbert, a canon connected to the royal court at Orléans and thus to Bertrada of Montfort and her brother, the bishop of Paris, was given responsibility for raising the young Heloise. Fulbert shared the literary enthusiasm of Baudri of Bourgueil, perhaps the most brilliant figure of the literary renaissance in Anjou in the late eleventh century, for educated women acquiring a classical education.

More important than any biological link between Hersende, prioress of Fontevraud, and Heloise is their shared social connection to the nobility of the French kingdom, coupled with a commitment to the cause of authenticity in religious life. Heloise's ideals of interiority in religious life echo those advocated by Robert of Arbrissel. Through her elite background, Heloise was more successful than Abelard in generating patronage for the Paraclete from the nobility of Champagne (to whom she probably could trace family connections). Hersende and Petronilla of Chemillé were even more successful, however, in winning support from the highest patrons, including Bertrada of Montfort, and her son, Fulk V.

and 91–99. The plays found alongside *Epithalamica* are edited and translated by Peter Dronke, *Nine Medieval Latin Plays* (Cambridge 1994) 92–105.

The Paraclete was a very different kind of abbey, being more modest in scale than Fontevraud. Heloise sought to distance herself from boasting about her family connections in her dealings with the local nobility of the region. Nonetheless, Heloise did have to face similar kinds of pressures, as Hersende had to confront in the early years of Fontevraud. The distance that separated Hersende from Heloise was that which divided two generations of religious reform. The two women nonetheless shared much in common, not least a conviction that an authentic religious life was not simply reserved to structures of traditional male monasticism. They both sought to move away from traditional monastic avoidance of interaction between men and women in religious life. During the 1130s, Heloise had to force Abelard to move beyond his rather rigid ideas about how authority should be constituted at the Paraclete, forcing him to accept that she should be an abbess, and thus of equal rank to Abelard. In her letters, she wanted to retrieve some of the intimacy in communication and ideals that they had once shared in their early relationship. This was not easy for Abelard to accept.

At the II Lateran Council, held in April 1139, canons were passed condemning the practice of women calling themselves religious, but not coming under the Rules of either Benedict, Augustine, or Basil. It was also forbidden for nuns to sing in the same choir as monks or canons.[167] An age of experimentation was coming to a close, as ecclesiastical authorities sought to define more closely the necessary distance between women and men in religious life. Communities for women would still continue to be established, but now it was increasingly important for boundaries of gender to be clearly demarcated. Women who fell outside the boundaries of either marriage or religious life incurred suspicion. Fontevraud and the Paraclete continued to grow, but they now entered a new phase in their development, marked more by consolidation than by experiment. Yet the situation of women living outside formal constraints, such as Marbod complained in his letter to Robert of Arbrissel, would continue to surface, as at Liège in the later part of the twelfth century.[168] Despite the rulings of the II Lateran Council, the issues of how to best to negotiate relationships between men and women within religious life would not go away.

Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology
School of Historical Studies
Box 11A Monash University
Victoria, Australia 3800

[167] *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo, J. A. Dossetti, P. P. Joannou, C. Leonardi, P. Prodi (Rome 1973) 203 [Canons 26–27]: "Ad haec perniciosam et detestabilem consuetudinem quarundam mulierum quae licet neque secundum regulam beati Benedicti neque Basilii aut Augustini vivant sanctimoniales tamen vulgo censeri desiderant aboleri decernimus. Simili modo prohibemus ne sanctimoniales simul cum canonicis vel monachis in ecclesia in uno choro conveniant ad psallendum."

[168] See the fascinating discussion by Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies. Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries 1200–1565* (Philadelphia 2001) 12–34.